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NEW YORK CHICAGO

CHARLES LAMB.

*After the painting by Henry Meyer.*

TWENTIETH CENTURY TEXT-BOOKS

# SELECTED ESSAYS OF LAMB

EDITED
WITH AN INTRODUCTION AND NOTES
BY

HOWARD BEMENT, A.M.
ENGLISH MASTER IN THE HILL SCHOOL

D. APPLETON AND COMPANY
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# PREFACE

My aim in the preparation of this edition has been to facilitate rapid and interested reading of such of the "Essays of Elia" as will most appeal to the average student. Lamb's style, however, presents difficulties; and his vocabulary, drawn largely from his sixteenth and seventeenth century favorites, contains many obsolete words and archaic forms. I have endeavored, by means of footnotes, to smooth away all these difficulties, and to make the way still easier by thus explaining many words and peculiarities of diction that do not fall under the classification named. For it is undoubtedly true that much of the interest which a course in Lamb ought to rouse in young readers will be crushed if free and rapid reading of the text be hampered by the obscurities of Lamb's style and language. If it is urged that the "dictionary habit" will not be formed where so much of this work is done for the student, I may reply that the notes are sufficiently few and Lamb's vocabulary is sufficiently large to afford ample opportunity for training in the use of the dictionary; and that more important than the "dictionary habit" is

the desirability of loving "the gentle Charles," and forming a taste for his quaint and incisive style.

I have also included as footnotes brief explanations of Lamb's less important allusions—allusions which the well-read student need not master, but which he should understand in order to get a clear grasp of the subject-matter.

In a separate group at the back of the book are explanatory notes on those allusions which seem to me important, whether intrinsically or because of the context; and these the student should make his own. Not the least value which Lamb presents as an author for school study is the compelling stimulus of his immense range of reading. His illustrative allusions and quotations are almost coextensive with literature itself; and to follow him at all, the student must inform himself with regard to many of these. This should be made a pleasure, not a burden; for Lamb's allusions are always so *apropos,* never "dragged in by the heels," as Lamb said was the case with some puns, that interest in mastering them need never flag. A student cannot lay aside his text at the end of the course, if he has done his work at all well, without being immensely broader in general information and culture. I have aimed throughout, in view of the decadence of classical study in many schools, to make the notes sufficiently full in the case of every allusion to mythology. I believe a special point should be made of stimulating interest in these allusions.

Quotations exact, quotations inexact, and mere fragments of random recollections are all found on every page of the essays. The temptation of every editor is, of course, to trace all these to their source. In the main, no good can be gained by burdening a school text with the sources of many quotations, save where the source would, in all probability, be known to the student. I have endeavored to let this criterion be my guide in deciding, in general, when to cite original passages. Most direct quotations, however, I have traced to their sources; depending, where my own memory or information was deficient, upon Ainger and Lucas, whose scholarship has supplied many a recondite allusion.

Nearly all teachers require the student to reproduce his impressions of the books he has read. This practice conduces to more faithful and retentive reading, and will not, when rightly guided, kill interest in the literature studied. Where teachers are preparing students for the college examinations, constant practice in theme writing on subjects taken from the literature is, of course, essential. Lamb's essays are so discursive, and many of them are so lacking in unity, that in most cases the titles of the essays themselves do not afford sufficiently suggestive titles for short class-room themes. There has been prepared, therefore, a list of suggested topics for written work, in which the principal points of each essay are made titles for short themes.

In preparing this edition I have, as has every other editor of Lamb, been under deepest obligation to the

work of Canon Ainger, whose edition of Lamb's works and whose unequaled biography are testimony to the most painstaking labor. Of the newer editions I have had constantly by me for consultation the admirable edition of E. V. Lucas. This must be considered the definitive edition of Lamb's works. Of the editions of the "Essays of Elia," that by Messrs. Hallward and Hill is most fully annotated, and I am indebted to it for many helpful suggestions. No editors have so cleverly run down many of Lamb's half-quotations and remote allusions.

I am indebted to Prof. Fred N. Scott, of the University of Michigan, and to Dr. J. A. Lester and Mr. F. W. Pine, of the Hill School, for helpful suggestions. To Messrs. G. P. Putnam's Sons, I am indebted for permission to reprint from Lucas' edition, above referred to, the map of the Temple. H. B.

THE HILL SCHOOL,
June, 1910.

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# THE PRINCIPAL WORKS OF CHARLES LAMB

(*Arranged Chronologically*)

1794. Sonnet on Mrs. Siddons (earliest published work).

1796. Sonnets (published with Coleridge's poems).

1798. Rosamund Gray. The Old Familiar Faces.

1802. John Woodvil. Ballads.

1803. Hester.

1805. Farewell to Tobacco.

1806. Mr. H.

1807. Tales from Shakespeare (with Mary Lamb).

1808. Adventures of Ulysses. Specimens of English Dramatic Poets Contemporary with Shakespeare.

1809. Mrs. Leicester's School (with Mary Lamb). Poetry for Children (with Mary Lamb).

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Contributions to the *Reflector*.

1818. Complete Works, in two volumes (Olliers).

1820–3. Essays of Elia, in the *London Magazine*.

1823. Essays of Elia, first series (Taylor and Hessey).

1823–6. Essays for the *London*, and other magazines.

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*Charles Lamb; a Memoir*, by B. W. PROCTER (BARRY CORNWALL).

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**Works containing interesting material regarding Lamb:**

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De Quincey's Works, Vol. V.

*Autobiography* and *Journals*, HAYDON.

*Diary*, HENRY CRABB ROBINSON.

*The Works of William Hazlitt*, and *Memoirs of William Hazlitt*, by W. CAREW HAZLITT.

**Reference Books for Use in Reading the Essays:**

SMITH'S (or some other) *Classical Dictionary.*

GAYLEY'S *Classic Myths.*

Shakespeare's Works.

*Words and their Ways in English Speech.*

Hogarth's Works.

MACDONALD'S Edition of *Essays of Elia* (for the illustrations).

LUCAS'S edition of *Essays of Elia* (for the notes).

# INTRODUCTION

## THE LIFE OF CHARLES LAMB

The life of Lamb combines so many seemingly contradictory elements that it challenges our interest at once; for it is a life filled with the heroic and the pathetic, the tragic and the comic; a life crowded with disappointments, but lighted by the sunniest of dispositions; a life filled with human weaknesses, but crowned with the noblest of self-sacrifice. It may be urged that all lives combine these elements to some degree; but in Lamb's case these contradictory phases stand out in their extremes.

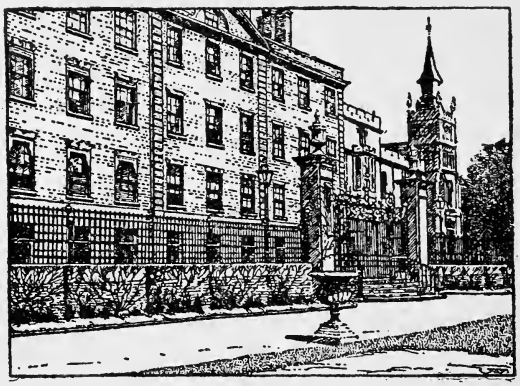
Let us take a glimpse at the actual facts of Lamb's life, and then go back to gather up the threads of it, and see to just what extent his life did exhibit these seemingly irreconcilable characteristics which have been mentioned.

**I. Birth and Early Life (1775–1782).**—Charles Lamb was a city child. His father, John Lamb, who had come to London a country boy to seek his fortune, was clerk and general assistant to Samuel Salt, a lawyer. Like all London lawyers, Salt had chambers in one of the Inns of Court,[1] in a building known as Crown Office Row, Inner Temple.[2] Here, at No. 2, in the very heart of London, Charles Lamb was born on February 10, 1775.

[1] See page xliii of the Introduction.

[2] See map on page xlvi.

He was the youngest of seven children, only three of whom, however, survived the period of early childhood. The other two, of whom we shall hear much, were



No. 2 Crown Office Row.
Lamb's Birthplace.

John Lamb, Jr., and Mary Lamb, the former twelve and the latter ten years older than Charles.

Charles Lamb was born to poverty. His father's position paid well enough, but the demands on his income were great, and the family seems always to have been in a state of financial embarrassment. To the boy, however, these early cares and struggles probably meant nothing. He was busy in and out among the cloisters, gardens, and fountains of the Inner Temple,[1] and was occupied by his early schooling under Mr. Bird in Fetter Lane. Mr. Bird's was a day school for boys and a night school for girls, whose advantages Mary Lamb shared, therefore, with her brother, although Lamb says he is sure that neither of them ever brought anything away from the school but a little of their native English.

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[1] "The Old Benchers of the Inner Temple," page 102.

**II. Life at Christ's Hospital (1782–1789).**[1]—At seven years of age Lamb went from the ancient Inner Temple to the ancient "Blue-coat School," Christ's Hospital, passing thus from "cloister to cloister"; for both these old groups of buildings were originally monasteries.

His early days at Christ's were trying ones. His impressions of them Lamb has himself recounted with sufficient fullness in the essay "Recollections of Christ's Hospital Five-and-thirty Years ago"[2]: how the boys dined in the great hall, fared forth on holidays to the

Supper at Christ's Hospital.

country or the Tower, frolicked through their lessons under mild Dr. Field, and tremblingly conned their Greek and Latin under the birch of rabid Dr. Boyer. In the essay "New Year's Eve," Lamb recalls fleeting impressions of his childhood at Christ's;[3] and in the

[1] See essay on "Christ's Hospital," page 14.
[2] See page 15ff.
[3] See page 45.

essay "Witches and Other Night Fears," he conjures up again the fearful images that visited his motherless pillow.[1]

His was a slight, shy figure, not assertive nor forward. His ability to make friends was handicapped by his habit of stammering; but those who grew to know him loved him. Gentle is the adjective that best described him then, and that clung to him in later life; and Charles Valentine Le Grice recalls that a certain peculiar fondness for the boy was evidenced at Christ's in their always speaking of him as Charles Lamb, never omitting the Christian name, though custom decreed use of the surname only.

The friendship between Lamb and Coleridge, who were fellow-students at Christ's, was the natural upspringing of a boyish regard, founded on mutual interests. Each was bookish; each was inclined to dreaminess and abstraction. Coleridge, who was three years Lamb's senior, exercised the stronger influence, and soon had completely dominated Lamb's sensitive mind. Together the boys talked, speculated, read the classics, and pored over Bowles's sonnets, the first great poetical influence in both their lives.

At Christ's Hospital Lamb laid the foundation for that long course of self-education which was to follow. He rose to be Deputy-Grecian (next to the highest class), being especially proficient in Latin composition. He would naturally have gone on to one of the universities; but it was expected that those who did should prepare for the ministry, and this Lamb's habit of stammering precluded. Furthermore, the boy was needed at home that he might contribute somewhat to

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[1] See page 124.

the support of the family, for John Lamb's mind was gradually failing, and the family was seriously embarrassed financially. And so, in 1789, Lamb passed out from the cloisters of Christ's Hospital and faced the future, the clouds of which were already hanging low.

**III. Time of "Storm and Stress" (1789–1796).**—The time was now at hand when Charles Lamb was to show the stuff of which he was made, for during the next seven years came the trials that were to test his character: the necessity, at fifteen, of going to work to buoy up the ebbing fortunes of his family, disappointed hopes in love, a period of insanity, and, finally, the death of his mother at the hand of Mary Lamb.

In 1789, or soon after, Charles Lamb obtained an introduction to the South Sea House through his brother, John, who held a good appointment there. A minor clerkship for the younger brother resulted—as far as the records show the only benefit of whatsoever sort that Charles ever received from John. John Lamb, though an able accountant, seems never to have felt the burden of any responsibility. While the family was suffering in poverty, owing to the father's decaying powers, and while Mary Lamb was taking in sewing, John was absent in bachelor quarters,[1] enjoying life and spending his income. He thus idly bequeathed to his younger brother the responsibilities that should have belonged to the older by right of primogeniture, and Charles, then as later, uncomplainingly took up the burden. The South Sea clerkship lasted until 1792, when Lamb received a more lucrative appointment in the East India House. In the meantime his social re-

[1] For Lamb's account of his brother, whom he calls James Elia in the essays, see pages 73–80.

laxations were taken with Coleridge and James White,[1] talking of literature and dreaming of authorship; and he spent an occasional holiday with his grandmother Field at Blakesware, in Hertfordshire.[2] On one of the visits to this place, which he has so charmingly described in one of his essays,[3] he met Ann Simmons, the "Alice Winterton" of the essays.[4]

Lamb has told us a little, in his veiled way, of his feeling for this fair-haired girl. How far his passion took possession of him, whether he ever spoke his heart or not, whether she in any way returned his affection—these questions will never be answered. We do know that by 1796 the understanding between them, if any, was broken off; and in this year Lamb, yielding to the hereditary taint, lost his reason, and spent six weeks in an asylum in Hoxton.

In September of this same year came heavier trouble. The family, in desperate financial straits, had removed from their old quarters in the Temple to Little Queen Street. Mrs. Lamb was a confirmed invalid; Mr. Lamb, like Lot of Orkney, beside the hearth lay "like a log, and all but smoulder'd out"; Charles had been absent at Hoxton; and the burden of it all fell upon Mary. Her reason too gave way; and, in a sudden passion of murderous insanity, she seized a knife from the table and stabbed her mother to death. She also wounded her father in the head, but Charles was by to prevent more bloody execution. This terrible tragedy

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[1] James, or Jem. White is referred to on pages 154, 162–165.

[2] This is the Norfolk of the essay, "Dream-Children," page 140.

[3] The essay "Blakesmoor in H——shire," in the second series of the "Essays of Elia." See page 223.

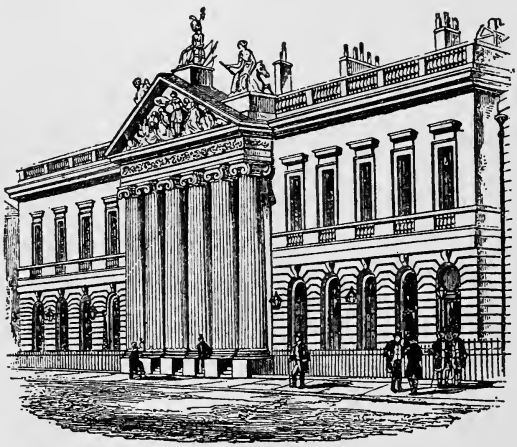
[4] See pages 44, 50, and the whole of the essay, "Dream-Children," on page 140.

was enough to have sent Charles again to the madhouse; but, strange to say, it had the opposite effect. He says in a letter to his constant correspondent, Coleridge, written in that same week: "God be praised, Coleridge, wonderful as it is to tell, I have never once been otherwise than collected and calm; . . . On that first evening, my aunt lying insensible, to all appearance like one dying—my father, with his poor forehead plastered over, from a wound he had received from a daughter dearly loved by him, who loved him no less dearly—my mother a dead and murdered corpse in the next room—yet was I wonderfully supported."

But what was to be done with Mary? She was at once put in confinement, but soon recovered her reason—was restored "to a dreadful sense and recollection of what had past." Despite her acquittal by a jury and the restoration of her reason, John Lamb, Jr., advocated her confinement, fearing a return of the madness, and being unwilling to stand sponsor for her in case of her release. Charles saw his duty in a different light, and entered into a formal contract to guard and support his afflicted sister. The older brother lent neither his approval nor his financial assistance. John Lamb, Sr., died a few months later; the old aunt followed within a few weeks; and thus it was that these two alone faced a future black with insanity, poverty, and isolation. For though Charles never had another attack of insanity, Mary frequently succumbed. "The attacks seemed to have been generally attended with forewarnings, which enabled the brother and sister to take necessary measures, and a friend of the Lambs has related how on one occasion he met the brother and sister, at such a season, walking hand in hand across the fields to the old asylum, both bathed in tears."

During this period Lamb published his first poetry —four sonnets in Coleridge's volume, "Poems on Various Subjects," in 1796, and, somewhat earlier, a sonnet on Mrs. Siddons, the tragic actress, published in the *Morning Chronicle*. During a lucid interval at Hoxton he wrote the beautiful sonnet to Mary Lamb, full of admiration and brotherly affection. He was longing with all the intensity of young genius to make his way in authorship, but disappointment awaited him.

**IV. Period of East India Clerkship (1796–1825).**— Four years before, in 1792, Lamb had obtained his appointment in the East India House. The position paid about $300 in our money at the beginning, the salary



The East India House.

gradually increasing to about $3,500. He now, in 1796, after the periods of absence caused by his own insanity and the family tragedy, addressed himself to his labors as the sole, and altogether insufficient, support of his sister and himself. He became the "notched and cropt scrivener," bound to the detested desk during the day, and hurrying home at night for a revel with his "folios, his midnight darlings."

For Lamb early became an inveterate reader, and especially a reader of old books—the neglected plays of the pre-Elizabethans and the contemporaries of Shakespeare and Ben Jonson, the works of Sir Thomas Browne, Fuller, and others. And as he read he wrote, first more poems with Coleridge, and, in 1798, a little romance, "A Tale of Rosamund Gray and Old Blind Margaret." The tale is intensely personal in many of its qualities, a brother and a sister in the story exhibiting relationships very like his and Mary's. In this same year Lamb wrote his most famous poem, "The Old Familiar Faces."

In the meantime Charles and Mary were living their life together, into which came some pleasure and much pain. The pleasures came in various ways, not always without alloy. In 1800, while living at Pentonville, Lamb had seen Hester Savary, a young Quakeress, come and go. He never spoke to her in his life, but she stirred his heart as no one save Ann Simmons had ever stirred it. One day Lamb missed her in his accustomed walks: she was dead. Then followed his lovely lyric, beginning,

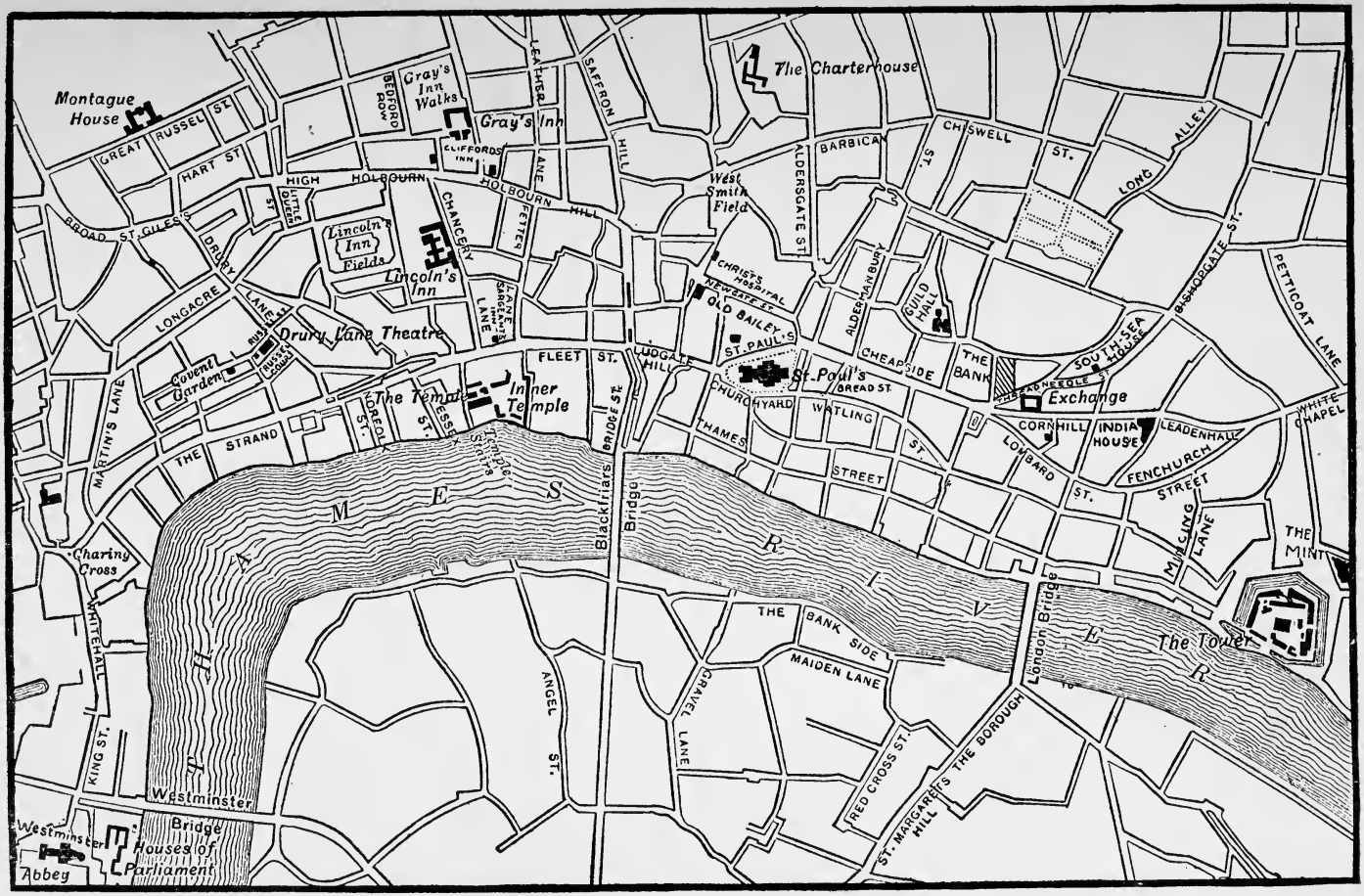
> "When maidens such as Hester die
> Their place ye may not well supply,
> Though ye among a thousand try
> With vain endeavor."

Then there were visits to Coleridge, in which Lamb took great delight; and pleasure came, too, in a growing acquaintance, largely due to Coleridge, with men of literature, famous or destined to become so: Godwin, Leigh Hunt, Wordsworth, Southey, and later, Keats, Haydon, De Quincey, and Hazlitt. Delightful to guests

and hosts alike were Charles's and Mary's Wednesday evening parties, which began in 1806. To these came the most famous literary men of England as to a salôn, to eat cold roast beef and potatoes, play whist, and talk of literature as only those men could talk.

The painful experiences of these days were largely the result of Mary's recurrent attacks, and of the inconveniences attending them. To quote Lamb's own words, they two "in their life of dual loneliness" became "shunned and marked." This "murderess," who had to be led off to the asylum periodically, and this brother, himself once an inmate, were not very desirable tenants. In 1800 they were forced to change their lodgings twice, finally removing to 16 Mitre Court Buildings, in the Temple, where they were glad to be again amid old scenes. Poverty, too, brought them much worry. But worse than the poverty were the fits of depression from which they both suffered. Mary Lamb wrote to a friend: "When I am pretty well his low spirits throw me back again; and when he begins to get a little cheerful, then I do the same kind office for him."

Wedded to these afflictions were Lamb's constant disappointments at failing to gain recognition through year after year of literary activity. Little return in money and none in reputation came as the result of his evenings of patient toil. The disappointments were repeated and bitter. In no less than four fields of literary enterprise were Lamb's ambitions blighted. "Rosamund Gray" had brought him little or no recognition as a writer of fiction. From 1800 to 1803 he tried journalism, writing squibs "at sixpence a joke" for the *Post*, the *Chronicle*, and the *Albion*, and failing alike of fame and fortune in the attempt. In 1802 he tried dramatic authorship, and wrote "John Woodvil," a five-act drama in blank verse.




CHARLES LAMB'S LONDON.

He managed to find a publisher, but no manager would produce the crude first effort. In 1806 his second effort, "Mr. H.," a farce, was hissed off the boards at Drury Lane Theater, Lamb himself, so it is said, joining from his box in the general evidence of public disfavor. The disappointment was intense; the loss of the needed funds was even worse. And yet again he failed, for his poetry was little read and not at all appreciated, the earlier work with Coleridge and the "Ballads" of 1802 bringing their author nothing of public recognition and no funds.

But it was not all failure. In 1807 the brother and sister published jointly the now famous "Tales from Shakespeare." The book went into a second edition the following year, and brought Charles a commission to write tales from the "Odyssey" for children. The book was published in 1808 as "The Adventures of Ulysses." While doing these pieces of hack work for money, he had been at work on a task more congenial. This same year, 1808, appeared his volume, "Specimens of English Dramatic Poets Contemporary with Shakespeare." In this he had collated typical scenes from the plays of the now famous but then unknown contemporaries of Shakespeare, to each selection appending a critical note of his own writing. Upon this volume and upon his critique on "The Genius and Character of Hogarth" (1811) rests Lamb's fame as a critic.

The story of the next few years is soon told: days of drudgery at his desk, evenings of reading and writing at home, or of social relaxation (too often "smoky and drinky," as Mary said) with friends abroad, or an evening at the theater with Mary. The Wednesday night parties were now famous. Much company came and went. Several times the brother and sister moved; in

1809 to Chancery Lane,[1] and thence the same year to No. 4 Inner Temple Lane; in 1817 to Great Russell Street, and in 1823 to Colebrook Row, Islington. During all this time Mary Lamb, still a victim of her periodical mania, would be absent for weeks at a time, and the brother would be left desolate.

The year 1818 was marked by the first collected edition of Lamb's works, published, in two volumes, by the Messrs. Ollier. Two years later (1820) occurs a date of even more importance. In August of that year he made his first contribution to the new *London Magazine* under the guise of "Elia," the essay being the first in this volume, entitled "The South-Sea House." Essays appeared in nearly every succeeding number, and "Elia" began speedily to reap the reward of fame that had long been denied Lamb in his own name. These essays were gathered together and published in 1823.

The year of publication of the "Essays of Elia" was marred by Lamb's unfortunate controversy with Southey.[2] About this time, also, the Lambs adopted a young girl, Emma Isola, whom they met at the home of a friend in Cambridge. She was the daughter of an Italian refugee, who had settled in Cambridge as a teacher of languages. Charles and Mary were "Uncle" and "Aunt" to her, and she made her home with them until she married Mr. Moxon, the publisher, in 1833. Emma Isola was increasingly a source of comfort to Charles as Mary's absences became more frequent and protracted.

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[1] For these locations see map on page xxv.

[2] See note prefacing essay, "Witches and Other Night Fears," page 269. For a full account of the controversy, see Ainger's "Life," Chapter VII.

**V. "The Superannuated Man" (1825–1834).**—Lamb had grown desperately tired of office confinement. Letters to his friends exhibit a weariness almost tantamount to illness. To Wordsworth he wrote, in 1822: "I grow ominously tired of official confinement. Thirty years have I served the Philistines, and my neck is not subdued to the yoke. . . . I sit like Philomel all day (but not singing)[1] with my heart against this thorn of a desk."

That he should be permitted to retire from active service on a pension was more than he dared to hope. "O that I were kicked out of Leadenhall[2] with every mark of indignity, and a competence in my fob!" he cried in a letter to Barton. Finally, in March of 1825, he let the directors know that he would be glad to be relieved of his duties. After weeks of impatient waiting, he was called into the Directors' Parlor, was formally pensioned off on two thirds his salary, left the Leadenhall Street offices, and "went home—forever."[3]

Charles Lamb was now free to devote himself wholly to writing. It is not strange, however, that we have from him in these last years no more and no better work than he had previously done. "When deliverance from the necessity of toil came," says Ainger, "he could not altogether resist the baneful effects of 'unchartered freedom' and 'the weight of chance desires.' And we may be sure we should not have had more, but fewer 'Essays of Elia,' if the daily routine of different labor had been less severe or regular."

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[1] Philomel, daughter of the king of Athens, was changed into a nightingale. This bird is said to sing with a thorn in her breast to make her song the sweeter.

[2] Leadenhall, the street in London in which the East India House is situated.

[3] See "The Superannuated Man," page 231.

Lamb wrote for the *London* until it suspended publication in 1826. He contributed "Popular Fallacies" to the *New Monthly Magazine,* and did some compilation for Hone. With the completion of the last essays of "Elia," published in book form in 1833, his work was practically done. In 1827 he had removed to Enfield; in 1833 he went into lodgings at Edmonton.

In July of the next year Coleridge died. Ainger tells the rest in a brief phrase: "There is a touching fitness in the circumstance that Charles Lamb could not longer survive his earliest and dearest friend—that, trying it for a little while 'he liked it not—and died.' On the 27th of December, murmuring in his last moments the names of his dearest friends, he passed tranquilly out of life. On the following Saturday his remains were laid in a deep grave in Edmonton churchyard, made in a spot which, about a fortnight before, he had pointed out to his sister, on an afternoon wintry walk, as the place where he wished to be buried."

Mary Lamb survived her brother thirteen years—a tragic circumstance, considering her dependence upon him—though kindly fate now seldom granted her periods of reprieve in which to mourn her loss. Her time was almost wholly spent in the asylum.

### LAMB'S APPEARANCE AND PERSONALITY

Shortly after Lamb's death, his friend Talfourd recorded impressions of his appearance: "Methinks I see him before me now, as he appeared then, and as he continued with scarcely any perceptible alteration to me, during the twenty years of intimacy which followed, and were closed by his death. A light frame, so fragile that it seemed as if a breath would overblow it, clad in clerk-like black, was surmounted by a head of form and ex-

pression the most noble and sweet. His black hair curled crisply about an expanded forehead; his eyes, softly brown, twinkled with varying expression, though the prevalent feeling was sad; and the nose, slightly curved, and delicately carved at the nostril, with the lower outline of the face regularly oval, completed a head which was finely placed on the shoulders, and gave importance and even dignity to the diminutive and shadowy stem. Who shall describe his countenance, catch its quivering sweetness, and fix it forever in words? There are none, alas, to answer the vain desire of friendship. Deep thought, striving with humor; the lines of suffering wreathed into cordial mirth; and a smile of painful sweetness, present an image to the mind it can as little describe as lose. His personal appearance and manner are not unfitly characterized by what he himself says in one of his letters to Manning, of Braham, ' a compound of the Jew, the gentleman, and the angel.' ''

Talfourd, in attempting to draw a picture of Lamb's personal appearance, has, unwittingly it would seem, pictured something of the personality of the man—something of that character made up of the contradictory principles already spoken of—a life that combined in one, extremes of the heroic and the pathetic, the tragic and the comic; a life that met more than its share of disappointments, yet remained sweet; a life humanly weak, in many of its aspects, yet unfalteringly grounded in that noblest of the divine attributes, loving self-effacement. We have seen the heroism, the tragedy, the disappointments, and the weaknesses worked out in Lamb's life; and it now remains for us to estimate the lighter and the brighter side of this most fascinating personality of our literature.

Most of Lamb's acquaintances knew him only as a rare wag, a great punster, and a player of practical jokes. His deadly fits of depression, which alternated with his buoyancy of spirits, were known only to those few friends to whom he opened his heart. To most of his friends he was " the gentle and the frolic "—sometimes gay even to the point of hysteria. He had an answer for every assault, an unexpected turn for every situation. On one occasion, when he was reproved for coming to the office late in the mornings, he pleaded that he made up for it by going away early in the afternoons. He once described Coleridge as an " archangel, a little damaged," than which there could be no more happy turning of Coleridge's propensity to lord it over his more modest friend in matters intellectual. " Charles, did you ever hear me preach? " asked Coleridge, referring to the days when he used to occupy a Unitarian pulpit. " I never heard you do anything else," was the reply of his imperturbable friend. Instances of his witty retorts might be multiplied indefinitely, though they would all lose in the telling through the lack of their setting.

In like manner, many instances of his warm-hearted generosity might be recorded. Barry Cornwall once appeared to be in low spirits when at Lamb's rooms. Lamb imagined he might be in financial difficulties. Turning suddenly to his friend he stammered out in his customary offhand manner: " My dear boy, I have a quantity of useless things—I have now in my desk a—a hundred pounds—that I don't *know* what to do with. Take it." Ainger records many instances of the bounty of one who could with difficulty get together enough for the modest necessities of his sister and himself. And when Lamb did not give of his all too scanty allowance,

he gave prodigally of his sympathy. All men were his brothers, from the beggar whose banishment from the streets he bemoaned [1] to the ragged little chimney sweep, of whom he writes with an almost maternal tenderness.[2] He loved children with a lonely bachelor's love,[3] and he venerated womanhood as only one of high-bred instincts and noble sentiments is able to do.[4]

Lamb was never happier than when "encountering pell-mell" the crowds in the streets of London. The city fascinated him. Here he was at home; here, he was accustomed to say, people should live. He spoke of "the sweet security of streets." He noted the motley crowds, not with the pity of the coxcomb, nor with the disassociated interest of the professional moralist and reformer, but with that human interest which saw in each individual a brother of like hopes and fears with himself.

Lamb was so keen an observer of all that went on about him, and was so interested in life as he saw it, that his lack of interest in politics is worthy more than passing mention. He noted the character and habits of beggars and sweeps as minutely as the botanist notes the flower or the entomologist the beetle; but in the current activities of politics, home or foreign, he exhibited, in his writings at least, not the slightest interest. The tumults of Jena and Waterloo passed by him unheeded; Napoleon swept the board of Europe, and then lost the game he had won, but Lamb seemed not to care. His fancy was not caught by the march of events; he was absorbed in his own progress through the world, and in

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1 See essay, "A Complaint of the Decay of Beggars."

2 See essay, "In Praise of Chimney Sweepers."

3 See essay, "Dream-Children."

4 See essay, "Modern Gallantry."

noting the things he saw as he passed along—men, women, children, city streets, buildings, "books, pictures, theaters, chit-chat, scandal, jokes, ambiguities, and a thousand whim-whams"—all that made up the life about him. He used the microscope, not the telescope.

This sounds as though Lamb were egotistical. In a way such was, indeed, the fact. "He seemed to realize in himself what Wordsworth long afterward described as 'the central calm at the heart of all agitation.' Through the medium of his mind the stormy convulsions of society were seen 'silent as in a picture.'" As Augustus Cæsar called up the whole world to be taxed, so he summoned mankind to be speculated upon. But his was a modest egotism, more apparent in his writings than in his personality. In truth, his modesty many times amounted to positive shyness. His stammering often made him, among strangers, "sit silent, and be suspected for an odd fellow"; and the memory of his own failures and disappointments kept him, among his peers and inferiors alike, the mildest of egotists.

Lamb had a fondness for things fixed and stable: "any alteration, on this earth of mine, in diet or in lodging, puzzles and discomposes me," he says in the essay, "New Year's Eve." Perhaps Lamb loved London so much because it was old and enduring; and he may have loved the human-kind for a like reason. At any rate, the love of antiquity he so often professed was a strong trait of his character. The expression of it in his writings appears in his frequent use of archaic forms and expressions; in his character, the feeling manifests itself in a spontaneous delight in old books, old prints and illustrations, old buildings, old familiar scenes.

Lamb was an artist. His essays, which seem so free in style and so colloquial in manner, were really the result of the most painstaking labor of which an artist is capable. And Lamb's was the artistic temperament—careless of convention, and affecting the unusual in dress, manner, and conversation. He loved the startling and the sudden; was never happier than when hoaxing some one; and was "as pleased as Punch" when he could shock some hide-bound pedant with a wild theory or an unorthodox assertion. He pronounced the most daring paradoxes with an air of deliberate wisdom; and put forth a wild theory as gravely as though he were uttering a platitude. Once he published, in utter seriousness, a memoir of the actor Liston which was pure fabrication. You will note throughout the essays this same love of mystification, of the hoax, and the paradox; and over all this wild and extravagant fooling the tinge of melancholy which marked the man, and the pathetic sweetness of disposition which all his biographers love to dwell upon.

### THE ESSAY

"The Nineteenth Century essay," says Professor Anderson, "was a new literary organ, difficult to define; something not a book, nor a treatise, nor a dissertation; long enough to instruct, to interest, to suggest a thousand things, and (what is perhaps its most important note) short enough to be read at one sitting." Its origin lies far back in antiquity—farther than we need to go. The essay of modern literature, however, takes its rise with the famous French essayist, Montaigne (1533–1592), who gave to this literary form the charmingly light, personal, and conversational touches which have ever since been demanded as its attributes. The charac-

ter of Montaigne's work may be described in his own words, "I speak unto paper as unto the first man I meet," which happily indicate his informal, conversational manner.

Bacon characterizes his own essays as "certain brief notes set down rather significantly than curiously"—that is, as being merely suggestive to the reader, rather than fully informing. Both he and Montaigne used the word essay in its Latin sense (*exagium*, a weighing). The direct English derivative, assay, meant to test, to try, in which sense it still survives. We thus see the essay to be a tiny literary crucible, in which questions of every kind are tested and tried, though not with finality. As Professor Anderson puts it in speaking of Bacon's essays: "Each was an assay of some topic, and a 'try' at its treatment. The title expressly waived any attempt at completeness, still less at exhaustiveness. In the first Baconian essays the subject was a mere heading, under which the author's opinions were jotted down with utmost conciseness."

The English essay has come down to us through many hands—each adding something to its significance and artistic value; we note Swift, Addison, Steele, Johnson, and Goldsmith of the eighteenth century; Lamb, Hazlitt, Hunt, De Quincey, Macaulay, Arnold, and Emerson of the nineteenth century. From among all these names that of Lamb stands forth as preëminent. It will be interesting to inquire somewhat into the secret of his art, the individuality of his method. At this point, however, take up the reading of the essays themselves. Read each essay through for its spirit and flavor, irrespective of the notes; then study the essay with the notes. When the volume has been completed, and after you have formed some critical opinions of your own, come back to

this critical matter, and study it in the light of what you have learned about the essays at first hand.

### LAMB AS AN ESSAYIST: THE QUALITIES OF HIS ART

He is a great writer who reproduces for us better than we could have described them, those seemingly uninteresting things of common experience about which we daily form impressions more or less vague. We live in the midst of many trivial events that go to make up life as a whole, and they seem so commonplace that they do not greatly impress us—our meals, our clothes, our neighbors, the beggars on the streets, the cab-drivers, the newsboys. Lamb, however, sees all these common things of life with keen eyes, and holds them up before us so vividly reproduced on the printed page that we behold them with our mind's eye as we never did with the eye of flesh. How does he do it? A short consideration of his method and style may answer the question.

In the first place, Lamb made the essay more intimate and personal than it had been even in Montaigne's hand; he made it lighter and more whimsical. At the same time, strange as the contradiction may seem, he made the essay deeper and more subtle than it had been in Bacon's hands. Bacon lived in a world of philosophical reflection, and as we read his essays we behold him at his work, digging among the abstruse things of life. Lamb does not appear to be at work at all, but he opens to us, nevertheless, the deepest wells of the human heart. He saw life deeply and reproduced it sincerely. This was the method and spirit of his work. Let us inquire somewhat into the detail of it.

Those who know Lamb only through his "Essays of Elia" see a man to whom few things in life appear wholly serious. Even the essays that seem most sober in

their vein, such as " New Year's Eve " and " Dream-Children," have their whimsicalities, which Lamb could not or would not write away. He interrupts some " heightened colloquy," in which perhaps a tone of veneration prevails, to throw you a scrap of waggery between parentheses which is worth a whole feast of other men's fun. Such is the little fling at woman's talkativeness in " A Quaker Meeting," when he describes the delights of silent intercourse, " reading a book through a long winter evening with a friend sitting by—say, a wife—he, or she, too (if that be probable), reading another, without interruption or oral communication." The parenthesis constitutes a shockingly delightful interruption of the sober progress of the essay. Wit such as this is a kind of explosive—you never know when it is going off, and Lamb himself seems not to know either. He would " e'en out with what was uppermost," be it a shocking pun, a flash of wit, or a boisterous paradox.

Then there is Lamb's mellow humor. Essays full of delicious nonsense, like " All Fools' Day " and " The Two Races of Men," and essays filled to the brim with the purest absurdity soberly dressed, like " A Dissertation on Roast Pig," illustrate his drollery at its best; but all the essays contain it to some degree. His love of hoax and mystification as shown in the essay, " The South-Sea House," where he dryly exclaims, " Living accounts and accountants puzzle me; I have no skill in figuring "; his extravagant flights of wildest fancy, as illustrated in " Distant Correspondents "; his absurd transference of archaic words and phrases to modern or trivial situations, as in " A Dissertation on Roast Pig "; his sly little hits at his friends, as shown by his constant ridiculing of Dyer and Coleridge, notably in " Oxford in the Vacation" and " The Two

Races of Men ''; his confidential asides with his reader; his multiplication of ridiculous details; his little ironies and droll figures of speech; all these are phases of waggery which are to be met with throughout the essays.

One of the delightful qualities of Lamb's humor is that it is often wholly unforeseen, and many times is so mixed with a subdued tenderness as to make us pause between a smile and a tear. In '' Mackery End,'' when describing Bridget, he says: '' We are generally in harmony, with occasional bickerings—as it should be among near relations.'' One critic says: '' What is the name for this antithesis of irony — this hiding of a sweet aftertaste in a bitter word? Whatever its name, it is a dominant flavor in Lamb's humor. . . . He takes homely and familiar things and makes them fresh and beautiful. The fashion of to-day is to vulgarize great and noble things by burlesque associations. The humorist's contrast is obtained in both cases; only that in the one it elevates the commonplace, and in the other it degrades the excellent.'' In these days of burlesque and vaudeville and comic supplement, we cannot dwell too long over Lamb's humor.

Perhaps the most striking feature of Lamb's style, however, is the happiness with which he turns his phrases. In a way that almost outdoes the strongest poetry, he describes in a line or two a bit of life or scenery over which the less clever writer might dwell for a labored page. Did you ever see a clearer picture in briefer compass than that miniature description of the fish pond in '' Dream-Children,'' where, as a boy, he watches '' the dace that darted to and fro in the fish pond at the bottom of the garden, with here and there a great sulky pike hanging midway down the water in silent state as if it mocked at their impertinent frisk-

ings ''? Or were ever indelible portraits painted in briefer compass than those pictures of Evans, Tame, Tipp, James Elia, Lovel, Salt, and Coventry? Were ever adjectives more fitly selected than when he pictures Coventry, '' whose person was a quadrate, his step massy and elephantine, his face square as a lion's, his gait peremptory and path-keeping ''?

In this connection must be mentioned the skill with which Lamb selects illustrative allusions, drawn from his immense range of reading. Of Coventry he said, he '' made a solitude of children wherever he came, for they fled his insufferable presence as they would have shunned an Elisha bear.'' Here is the one allusion in all literature fitted to describe the terror of the fleeing children; and Lamb picked it out with unerring accuracy. There is a touch of the awe of Mt. Sinai when, further describing Coventry, he says, '' Clouds of snuff, aggravating the natural terrors of his speech, broke from each majestic nostril, darkening the air.'' There is genius defying criticism when, from his wide range of reading, he draws those two contrasting pictures from Milton to illustrate the seasonable and the unseasonable graces; when, comparing the lower and the upper schools at Christ's, he says, '' We were a sort of Helots to his young Spartans ''; and when he speaks of the ass harbored by the execrable monitor H—— as being '' happier than Caligula's minion.''

A consideration of the diversity of Lamb's illustrative allusions leads naturally to another point closely related to his bookishness—his use of old words and quaint phrases. Herein is shown his devotion to Sir Thomas Browne, Fuller, Burton, and other of his '' midnight darlings.'' Such an old word is *agnize*, used in the essay, '' Oxford in the Vacation,'' while others are *en-*

*gendure* (page 103), and *reluct* (page 47). Such words as these, usually awkward and cumbersome, fall naturally from his lips, and seem wholly in keeping with the old *thee* and *thou* he so often affects. In his serious vein he says ("A Quakers' Meeting"), "Dost thou love silence?" and the Biblical form is impressive; in a lighter mood, when describing his favorite young pig a-roasting, he exclaims, "How equably he twirleth round the string," and the effect is ludicrous.

Lamb is possessed of wonderful ability in producing precisely the impression he intends. He does it many times by piling figure on figure, by multiplying new and unique ways of expressing the same thought. An example of this to which attention is called in the notes is to be found on page 92. Refer to the passage and notice how he leaves the thought at the end of the paragraph struck through with light from every conceivable angle of vision. The sentences are crisp and clear, each amplifying the thought already presented rather than presenting a new thought. This is a favorite method of Lamb's, and is always a telling one. Often, too, he closes the paragraph with a restatement of the truth in terse, epigrammatic sentences. Not less does Lamb aim at producing the desired impression when he exhibits the strong differences between his narrative and his expository styles. When he tells a story he does it simply, using few archaic words and little involved phraseology; the moment he leaves narrative and proceeds in the essay manner, there is a return to his models. An excellent example of the two styles in a single essay is to be found in "A Dissertation on Roast Pig." The story of Hoti and Bobo is a narrative of the origin of roast pig, told in Lamb's simplest manner; but when he begins his exposition of the delights of roast pig, the style changes at

once to the complex: the archaic words again make their appearance, and the quaint phrases and the old peculiarities of diction fall naturally upon the page.

It will be seen from what has been said that Lamb was more than a craftsman; he was an artist, who knew how to choose his materials, blend his colors, create his effects. The appearance of easy colloquialism in his essays was studied, and bears witness to Lamb's intimate knowledge of his art—" the art that conceals art." His style has been the admiration of the critics and the despair of the imitators ever since the first volumes of the *London* appeared; and it has now come to be so universally recognized as his, and his alone, that it is doubtful if it can ever be successfully copied by no matter how clever a craftsman. " He was," says Ainger, " the last of the Elizabethans. He had ' learned their great language,' and yet he had early discovered, with the keen eye of a humorist, how effective for his purpose was the touch of the pedantic and the fantastical from which the noblest of them were not wholly free. He was thus able to make even their weaknesses a fresh source of delight, as he dealt with them from the vantage ground of two centuries. . . . But it is not the antique manner—the ' self-pleasing quaintness '—that has embalmed the substance. Rather is there that in the substance which insures immortality for the style. It is one of the rewards of purity of heart that, allied with humor, it has promise of perennial charm."

### MARY LAMB

" Mary Lamb survived her brother nearly thirteen years, dying at the advanced age of eighty-two, on the 20th of May, 1847. . . . After leaving Edmonton, she lived chiefly at St. John's Wood, under the care of a

nurse. Her pension, together with the income from her brother's savings, was amply sufficient for her few needs.

"'She will live forever in the memory of her friends,' writes that true and faithful friend, Crabb Robinson, 'as one of the most amiable and admirable of women.' From this verdict there is no dissentient voice. . . . Her few but very significant letters, and her contributions to literature, show her strong and healthy common sense, her true womanliness, and her gift of keen and active sympathy. She shared with Charles a love of Quakerlike color and homeliness in dress. 'She wore a neat cap,' Mr. Procter tells us, 'of the fashion of her youth; an old-fashioned dress. Her face was pale and somewhat square, but very placid, with gray, intelligent eyes. She was very mild in her manners to strangers; and to her brother, gentle and tender, always. She had often an upward look of peculiar meaning when directed toward him, as though to give him an assurance that all was then well with her.' This unvarying manner, betokening mutual dependence and interest, was the feature that most impressed all who watched them together, her eyes often fixed on his as on 'some adoring disciple,' and ever listening to help his speech in some difficult word, and to anticipate the coming need. He in turn was always on the watch to detect in her face any sign of failing health or spirits, and to divert the conversation, if occasion arose, from any topic that might distress her or set up some dangerous excitement. . . . She was strong where he was weak, and reposeful where he was often ill at ease. She was indeed fitted in all respects to be Charles Lamb's lifelong companion."
—*Ainger's* "Charles Lamb," VIII.

### THE INNS OF COURT

Lamb's father, who was clerk to a London lawyer, lived nearly all his life in the midst of the Temple and the activities of the courts. Lamb himself was born in the Inner Temple, lived there continuously (save for his residence at Christ's Hospital) for twenty years (1775–1795), and at later periods in his life he lived in that district in London known as the "Temple," or in streets adjacent thereto, for considerable periods. It is natural, therefore, that the "Essays of Elia" should abound in references to the Temple and the Inns of Court; and it is equally natural that the American student should be confused by familiar references to places and customs unfamiliar to him. It will be well, therefore, to inquire with regard to the Inns of Court, and to learn something of that maze of buildings in London which surround the courts and house the lawyers that practice therein.

There are in London four sets of buildings, the Inner Temple, the Middle Temple, Lincoln's Inn, and Gray's Inn, which are devoted to the law and the lawyers. These four groups of buildings belong to the four legal societies which have the exclusive right of admitting persons to practice at the bar, and which hold a course of instruction and examination for that purpose; hence the term "Inns of Court" is also applied to the societies themselves.

The buildings of the Inns of Court were originally inns (*hospitia*) at which law and other students were housed, fed, and given their training, in the early days training in divinity, dancing, vocal and instrumental music, as well as in law. At a later time the training became less emphasized, the Inns being more and more

regarded as buildings to let in chambers for the use of lawyers and law students, without any regard to the training which the legal societies were supposed to administer.

At the present time, however, the Inns of Court are real seminaries of legal learning, having more the character of our own law schools. Students are admitted on examination. Good courses of lectures have been introduced. Each Inn maintains a church and a rector of the Church of England, the famous Church of the Templars, St. Mary's, being shared in common by the Inner and the Middle Temples (page 102).

Each Inn is distinct from the other, and is self-governing. A curious fact about them is, that while they are unincorporated, self-perpetuating, and entirely independent, they have the exclusive right of admitting to the bar, and also of disbarring. They do not govern attorneys, however—merely the barristers.[1]

Each Inn of Court elects its senior members to a governing body, in whose hands entire control is placed. This body is known as the "Bench," and the members of it the "Benchers." In the several societies the number of benchers varies from forty to eighty. (See Lamb's essay, "The Old Benchers of the Inner Temple," page 102.)

Students going from the universities into law used first to go to the Inns of Chancery and then to the Inns of Court, to which the former were in a manner subordinate and preparatory. Each Inn of Court had its re-

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[1] In America the terms attorney and counselor are interchangeable. In England an attorney or solicitor does not appear in court, but begins actions at law and furnishes material to the barrister, or counselor, who alone is permitted to plead a case in court.

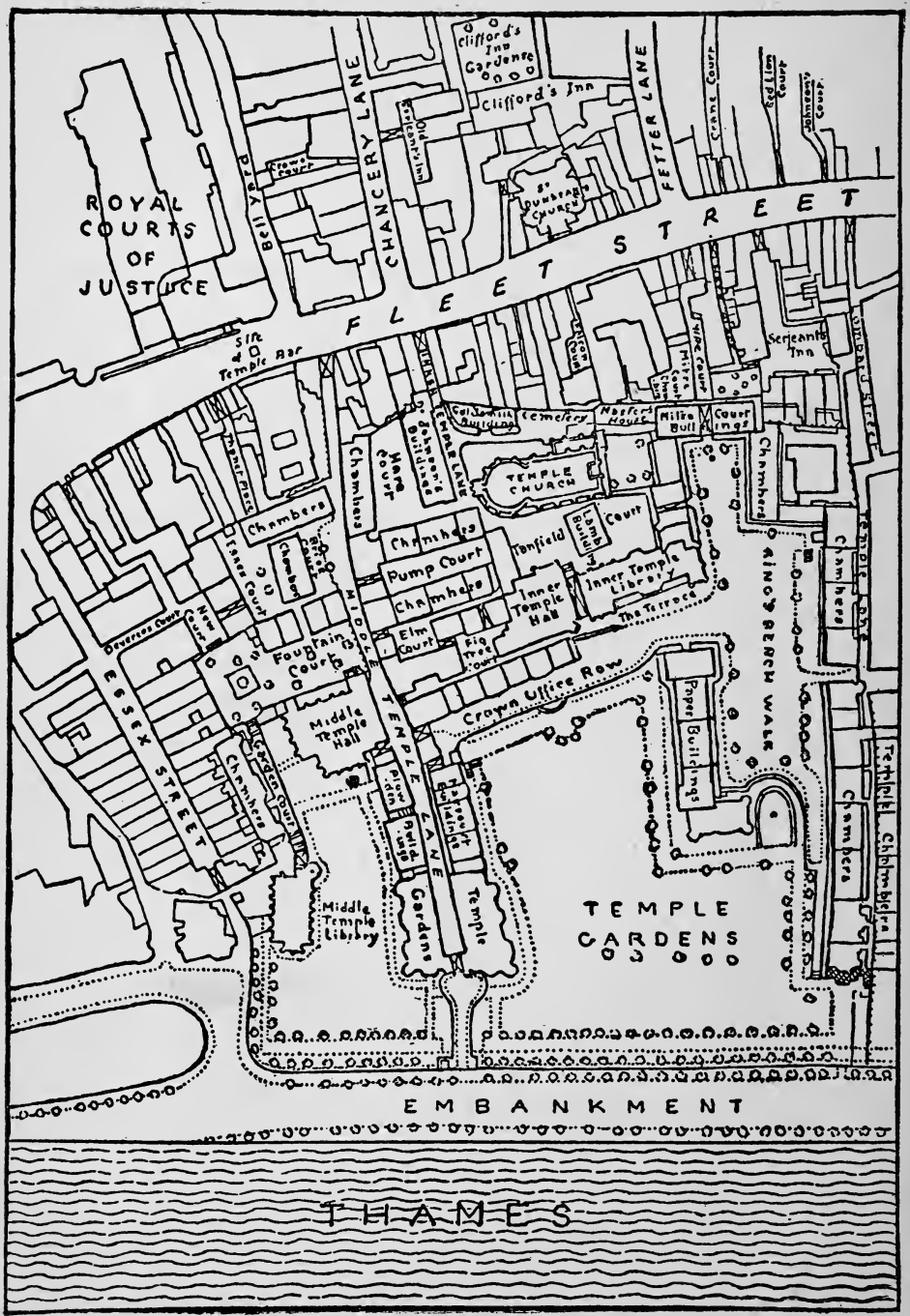
lated Inns of Chancery (there were nine in all), the best known, Clifford's Inn, being attached to the Inner Temple, while Furnival's Inn (now demolished) belonged to Lincoln's Inn.

The Inns to-day consist of large tracts of houses and chambers occupied by benchers, barristers, and students. The buildings are all within three quarters of a mile of each other, the district being that bounded, roughly, on the south by the Thames; on the east by Temple Avenue, Chancery Lane, and Gray's Inn Road; on the north by Theobald's Road; on the west by Gray's Inn Gardens, Lincoln's Inn Fields, the Courts of Justice, and Essex Street. The accompanying map will give a general idea of the grouping of the buildings.

The Temple gets its name from the fact that it was originally the English home of the Knights Templar, the present Inner Temple occupying the site of the old mansion of the Templars. The Knights Templar were dissolved in 1312, and by 1350 legal societies had taken over their quarters. Most of the old buildings of the Inner Temple were destroyed in the great fire of 1666, the Temple Church being the only building to survive. This old building is famous not only for its age, but because it is one of the four round churches built on the plan of the church of the Holy Sepulcher at Jerusalem. Goldsmith is buried in the churchyard.

The buildings are on the opposite side of Middle Temple Lane from the Inner Temple. The old hall, in which occurred many famous incidents, notably the maskings and entertainments to Queen Elizabeth, was completed in 1572.

In the reign of Edward II the Earl of Lincoln possessed Lincoln's Inn. It was probably used as a law-




MAP OF THE TEMPLE.

yers' inn as early as 1310. The old hall, built in 1506, still remains.

Gray's Inn was occupied by lawyers before 1370. The present hall was completed in 1560. Here, in 1594, Shakespeare's "Comedy of Errors" was acted. It is supposed that Francis Bacon laid out the garden and planted some of the trees in 1597.[1]

Clifford's Inn, one of the principal Inns of Chancery, is several times mentioned by Lamb, once as being the home of his friend Dyer. It was named after Robert de Clifford, living in the reign of Edward II, and is the oldest inn in Chancery. It is now used for office and business purposes. The Inn was once noted from the fact that all the attorneys of the Marshalsea court,[2] where debtors were tried, had their chambers there.

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[1] The Outer Temple has been torn down, the site now being occupied by Exeter House and Essex Street. The name has since been appropriated by a new block of offices and chambers opposite the new law courts.

[2] The Marshalsea court is the famous debtors' court. The Marshalsea prison, where debtors were confined, has been made famous by Dickens's story, "Little Dorrit."

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# LAMB'S KEY

THE essays are full of veiled references to Lamb's friends, acquaintances, and others, usually indicated by an initial, occasionally by dashes or asterisks. The explanatory Key that follows, Lamb drew up for his friend Mr. Pitman, a fellow clerk at the East India House. While the footnotes in this edition interpret the references, it will be of interest to note the form of Lamb's Key and the comments he appended. The Key is as Lamb gave it, save that the numbers of the pages are altered to refer to this edition. Where no page is given, the reference is to an essay not included in this edition:

| | *Page* | |
|---|---|---|
| M..... | 12 | Maynard, hang'd himself. |
| G. D..... | | George Dyer, Poet. |
| H..... | 18 | Hodges. |
| W..... | 29 | |
| Dr. T——e. | 30 | Dr. Trollope. |
| Th..... | 31 | Thornton. |
| S..... | 32 | Scott, died in Bedlam. |
| M..... | 32 | Maunde, dismiss'd school. |
| C. V. le G... | 32 | Charles Valentine le Grice. |
| F..... | 33 | Favell; left Cambrg because he was ashamed of his father, who was a house-painter there. |
| Fr..... | 33 | Franklin, Gramr Mast., Hertford. |
| T..... | 33 | Marmaduke Thompson. |
| K..... | 41 | Kenney, Dramatist. Author of "Raising Wind," etc. |

| | *Page* | |
|---|---|---|
| S. T. C..... | 42 | Samuel Taylor Coleridge (not in Lamb's autograph). |
| Alice W——n | 44 | Winterton (feigned). |
| ***..... | 45 | No meaning. |
| ****..... | 45 | |
| ***..... | 45 | |
| Mrs. S..... | 54 | Mrs. Spinkes. |
| R..... | | Ramsay, London Library, Ludg. St.; now extinct. |
| Granville S. | | Granville Sharp (not in Lamb's autograph). |
| E. B..... | | Edward Burney, half-brother of Miss Burney. |
| B..... | 96 | Braham, now a Xtian. |
| *** *** ****. | 79 | Distrest Sailors. |
| J.——ll.... | 107 | Jekyll. |
| Susan P.... | 110 | Susan Pierson. |
| R. N..... | 117 | Randall Norris, Subtreasr, Inner Temple. |
| C..... | 135 | Coleridge. |
| F..... | | Field. |
| B. F..... | 146 | Baron Field, brother of Frank. |
| Lord C..... | 149 | Lord Camelford. |
| Sally W——r | 154 | Sally Winter. |
| J. W..... | 154 | Jas. White, author of "Falstaff's Letters." |
| St. L..... | | No meaning. |
| B. Rector of | | |

# *DEDICATION*

## *TO THE FRIENDLY AND JUDICIOUS READER*

*Who will take these Papers as they were meant; not understanding everything perversely in the absolute and literal sense, but giving fair construction as to an after-dinner conversation; allowing for the rashness and necessary incompleteness of first thoughts; and not remembering for the purpose of an after taunt words spoken peradventure after the fourth glass. The Author wishes (what he would wish for himself) plenty of good friends to stand by him, good books to solace him, prosperous events to all his honest undertakings, and a candid interpretation to his most hasty words and actions. The other sort (and he hopes many of them will purchase his book too) he greets with the curt invitation of Timon, "Uncover, dogs, and lap," or he dismisses them with the confident security of the philosopher, "You beat but on the case of—* ELIA."

*December* 7, 1822.

# SELECTED ESSAYS OF LAMB

## I. THE SOUTH-SEA HOUSE

READER, in thy passage from the Bank—where thou hast been receiving thy half-yearly dividends (supposing thou art a lean annuitant like myself)—to the Flower Pot, to secure a place for Dalston, or Shacklewell, or some other thy suburban retreat northerly,— didst thou never observe a melancholy-looking, handsome, brick and stone edifice, to the left—where Threadneedle Street abuts upon Bishopsgate? I daresay thou hast often admired its magnificent portals ever gaping wide, and disclosing to view a grave court, with cloisters, and pillars, with few or no traces of goers-in or comers-out—a desolation something like Balclutha's.

This was once a house of trade,—a center of busy interests. The throng of merchants was here—the quick pulse of gain—and here some forms of business are still kept up, though the soul be long since fled. Here are still to be seen stately porticoes; imposing staircases; offices roomy as the state apartments in palaces —deserted, or thinly peopled with a few straggling clerks; the still more sacred interiors of court and committee-rooms, with venerable faces of beadles, doorkeepers—directors seated in form on solemn days (to

1. **the Bank**: the Bank of England, Threadneedle Street, London.

4. **the Flower Pot**: an old inn near the South-Sea House, from which the coaches started.

proclaim a dead dividend), at long worm-eaten tables, that have been mahogany, with tarnished gilt-leather coverings, supporting massy silver inkstands long since dry;—the oaken wainscots hung with pictures of deceased governors and sub-governors, of Queen Anne, and the two first monarchs of the Brunswick dynasty;—huge charts, which subsequent discoveries have antiquated;—dusty maps of Mexico, dim as dreams,—and soundings of the Bay of Panama!—The long passages hung with buckets, appended, in idle row, to walls, whose substance might defy any, short of the last conflagration:—with vast ranges of cellarage under all, where dollars and pieces of eight once lay, an "unsunned heap," for Mammon to have solaced his solitary heart withal,—long since dissipated, or scattered into air at the blast of the breaking of that famous BUBBLE.——

Such is the SOUTH-SEA HOUSE. At least, such it was forty years ago, when I knew it,—a magnificent relic! What alterations may have been made in it since, I have had no opportunities of verifying. Time, I take for granted, has not freshened it. No wind has resuscitated the face of the sleeping waters. A thicker crust by this time stagnates upon it. The moths, that were then battening upon its obsolete ledgers and day-books, have rested from their depredations, but other light

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1. **dead dividend.** Dividends on business actually done had long since ceased; only interest returns on capital held by the government were made.

13. **pieces of eight:** the Spanish dollar, or piaster, divided into eight reals.

13–14. **"unsunned heap."** Cf. Milton's "Comus," 398.

14. **Mammon:** riches personified, from the name of the Syrian god of riches. Cf. "Faerie Queen," II, 7.

24. **battening:** fattening.

25. **other light generations:** other moths and insects.

generations have succeeded, making fine fretwork among their single and double entries. Layers of dust have accumulated (a superfœtation of dirt!) upon the old layers, that seldom used to be disturbed, save by some curious finger, now and then, inquisitive to explore the mode of book-keeping in Queen Anne's reign; or, with less hallowed curiosity, seeking to unveil some of the mysteries of that tremendous HOAX, whose extent the petty peculators of our day look back upon with the same expression of incredulous admiration, and hopeless ambition of rivalry, as would become the puny face of modern conspiracy contemplating the Titan size of Vaux's superhuman plot.

Peace to the manes of the BUBBLE! Silence and destitution are upon thy walls, proud house, for a memorial!

Situated as thou art, in the very heart of stirring and living commerce,—amid the fret and fever of speculation—with the Bank, and the 'Change, and the India House about thee, in the hey-day of present prosperity, with their important faces, as it were, insulting thee, their *poor neighbor out of business*—to the idle and merely contemplative,—to such as me, old house! there is a charm in thy quiet:—a cessation—a coolness from business—an indolence almost cloistral—which is delightful! With what reverence have I paced thy great bare rooms and courts at eventide! They spoke of the past:—the shade of some dead accountant, with visionary pen in ear, would flit by me, stiff as in life. Living accounts and accountants puzzle me. I have no skill

3. **a superfœtation of dirt:** layer upon layer of dirt.
9. **petty peculators:** thieves on a small scale.
19. **'Change:** the Royal Exchange.
25. **cloistral:** like cloisters, where indolent monks live.

in figuring. But thy great dead tomes, which scarce three degenerate clerks of the present day could lift from their enshrining shelves—with their old fantastic flourishes, and decorative rubric interlacings—their sums in triple columniations, set down with formal superfluity of cyphers—with pious sentences at the beginning, without which our religious ancestors never ventured to open a book of business, or bill of lading—the costly vellum covers of some of them almost persuading us that we are got into some *better library,*—are very agreeable and edifying spectacles. I can look upon these defunct dragons with complacency. Thy heavy odd-shaped ivory-handled penknives (our ancestors had everything on a larger scale than we have hearts for) are as good as anything from Herculaneum. The pounce-boxes of our days have gone retrograde.

The very clerks which I remember in the South-Sea House—I speak of forty years back—had an air very different from those in the public offices that I have had to do with since. They partook of the genius of the place!

They were mostly (for the establishment did not admit of superfluous salaries) bachelors. Generally (for they had not much to do) persons of a curious and speculative turn of mind. Old-fashioned, for a reason mentioned before. Humourists, for they were of all descriptions; and, not having been brought together in

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4. **rubric interlacings:** red lines crossing on the page.

5. **triple columniations:** three columns—for pounds, shillings, and pence.

16. **pounce-boxes:** boxes containing pounce—a fine powder which was sprinkled over the written page to prevent the ink from blotting.

20. **genius:** spirit.

early life (which has a tendency to assimilate the members of corporate bodies to each other), but, for the most part, placed in this house in ripe or middle age, they necessarily carried into it their separate habits and oddities, unqualified, if I may so speak, as into a common stock. Hence they formed a sort of Noah's ark. Odd fishes. A lay-monastery. Domestic retainers in a great house, kept more for show than use. Yet pleasant fellows, full of chat—and not a few among them had arrived at considerable proficiency on the German flute.

The cashier at that time was one Evans, a Cambro-Briton. He had something of the choleric complexion of his countrymen stamped on his visage, but was a worthy sensible man at bottom. He wore his hair, to the last, powdered and frizzed out, in the fashion which I remember to have seen in caricatures of what were termed, in my young days, *Maccaronies*. He was the last of that race of beaux. Melancholy as a gib-cat over his counter all the forenoon, I think I see him making up his cash (as they call it) with tremulous fingers, as if he feared every one about him was a defaulter; in his hypochondry ready to imagine himself one; haunted, at least, with the idea of the possibility of his becoming one: his tristful visage clearing up a little over his roast neck of veal at Anderton's at two (where his picture still hangs, taken a little before his death by desire of

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12–13. **Cambro-Briton:** Welshman. Cambria was the Latin name for Wales.

18. **Maccaronies:** fops; dandies.

19. **gib-cat:** a tom-cat. For derivation see dictionary. Cf. Shakespeare's "I Henry IV," I, ii.

23. **hypochondry:** melancholy; despondency.

25. **tristful visage:** sad countenance. Cf. "Hamlet," III, iv, 50.

the master of the coffee-house, which he had frequented for the last five-and-twenty years), but not attaining the meridian of its animation till evening brought on the hour of tea and visiting. The simultaneous sound of his well-known rap at the door with the stroke of the clock announcing six, was a topic of never-failing mirth in the families which this dear old bachelor gladdened with his presence. Then was his *forte,* his glorified hour! How would he chirp, and expand over a muffin! How would he dilate into secret history! His countryman, Pennant himself, in particular, could not be more eloquent than he in relation to old and new London—the site of old theaters, churches, streets gone to decay—where Rosamond's Pond stood—the Mulberry-gardens—and the Conduit in Cheap—with many a pleasant anecdote, derived from paternal tradition, of those grotesque figures which Hogarth has immortalized in his picture of *Noon,*—the worthy descendants of those heroic confessors, who, flying to this country, from the wrath of Louis the Fourteenth and his dragoons, kept alive the flame of pure religion in the sheltering obscurities of Hog-lane, and the vicinity of the Seven Dials!

Deputy, under Evans, was Thomas Tame. He had the air and stoop of a nobleman. You would have taken him for one, had you met him in one of the passages leading to Westminster-hall. By stoop, I mean that gentle bending of the body forwards, which, in great men, must be supposed to be the effect of an habitual condescending attention to the applications of

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8. **forte:** time when he was at his best.

27. **Westminster-hall:** now one of the entrances to the houses of Parliament, where one would be likely to meet members of the nobility.

their inferiors. While he held you in converse, you felt strained to the height in the colloquy. The conference over, you were at leisure to smile at the comparative insignificance of the pretensions which had just awed you. His intellect was of the shallowest order. It did not reach to a saw or a proverb. His mind was in its original state of white paper. A sucking babe might have posed him. What was it then? Was he rich? Alas, no! Thomas Tame was very poor. Both he and his wife looked outwardly gentlefolks, when I fear all was not well at all times within. She had a neat meagre person, which it was evident she had not sinned in over-pampering; but in its veins was noble blood. She traced her descent, by some labyrinth of relationship, which I never thoroughly understood,— much less can explain with any heraldic certainty at this time of day,—to the illustrious, but unfortunate house of Derwentwater. This was the secret of Thomas's stoop. This was the thought—the sentiment—the bright solitary star of your lives,—ye mild and happy pair,—which cheered you in the night of intellect, and in the obscurity of your station! This was to you instead of riches, instead of rank, instead of glittering attainments: and it was worth them all together. You insulted none with it; but, while you wore it as a piece

1–2. While he talked with you, you felt keyed to the highest pitch of attention.

6. **saw**: a maxim—or any trite saying.

7. **original state of white paper**: his mind was as blank as the paper on which nothing is written. Cf. Locke, "On the Human Understanding," II.

8. **posed**: to pose is to puzzle by asking a question hard to answer.

16. **heraldic certainty**: the certainty of a coat of arms showing descent.

of defensive armor only, no insult likewise could reach you through it. *Decus et solamen.*

Of quite another stamp was the then accountant, John Tipp. He neither pretended to high blood, nor in good truth cared one fig about the matter. He "thought an accountant the greatest character in the world, and himself the greatest accountant in it." Yet John was not without his hobby. The fiddle relieved his vacant hours. He sang, certainly, with other notes than to the Orphean lyre. He did, indeed, scream and scrape most abominably. His fine suite of official rooms in Threadneedle Street, which, without anything very substantial appended to them, were enough to enlarge a man's notions of himself that lived in them—(I know not who is the occupier of them now [1])—resounded fortnightly to the notes of a concert of "sweet breasts," as our ancestors would have called them, culled from club-rooms and orchestras—chorus singers—first and second violoncellos—double basses—and clarionets—who ate his cold mutton, and drank his punch, and praised his ear. He sate like Lord Midas among them. But at the desk Tipp was quite another sort of creature. Thence all ideas, that were purely ornamental, were banished. You could not speak of anything romantic without rebuke.

[1] [I have since been informed, that the present tenant of them is a Mr. Lamb, a gentleman who is happy in the possession of some choice pictures, and among them a rare portrait of Milton, which I mean to do myself the pleasure of going to see, and at the same time to refresh my memory with the sight of old scenes. Mr. Lamb has the character of a right courteous and communicative collector.]

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2. **Decus et solamen:** glory and consolation.

16. **"sweet breasts":** musicians. In an old sense, the word breast means "musical voice."

Politics were excluded. A newspaper was thought too refined and abstracted. The whole duty of man consisted in writing off dividend warrants. The striking of the annual balance in the company's books (which, perhaps, differed from the balance of last year in the sum of £25, 1s. 6d.) occupied his days and nights for a month previous. Not that Tipp was blind to the deadness of *things* (as they call them in the city) in his beloved house, or did not sigh for a return of the old stirring days when South-Sea hopes were young— (he was indeed equal to the wielding of any the most intricate accounts of the most flourishing company in these or those days) :—but to a genuine accountant the difference of proceeds is as nothing. The fractional farthing is as dear to his heart as the thousands which stand before it. He is the true actor, who, whether his part be a prince or a peasant, must act it with like intensity. With Tipp form was everything. His life was formal. His actions seemed ruled with a ruler. His pen was not less erring than his heart. He made the best executor in the world: he was plagued with incessant executorships accordingly, which excited his spleen and soothed his vanity in equal ratios. He would swear (for Tipp swore) at the little orphans, whose rights he would guard with a tenacity like the grasp of the dying hand that commended their interests to his protection. With all this there was about him a

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2. **abstracted:** visionary, or ideal, as opposed to the real and practical things of the accountant's office.

14–15. **The fractional farthing:** to the true accountant, an exact balance is the thing; he is as disturbed over a small difference as over a large.

21. **executor:** one appointed by a will to execute the terms of the will.

sort of timidity—(his few enemies used to give it a worse name)—a something which, in reverence to the dead, we will place, if you please, a little on this side of the heroic. Nature certainly had been pleased to endow John Tipp with a sufficient measure of the principle of self-preservation. There is a cowardice which we do not despise, because it has nothing base or treacherous in its elements; it betrays itself, not you: it is mere temperament; the absence of the romantic and the enterprising; it sees a lion in the way, and will not, with Fortinbras, "greatly find quarrel in a straw," when some supposed honor is at stake. Tipp never mounted the box of a stage-coach in his life; or leaned against the rails of a balcony; or walked upon the ridge of a parapet; or looked down a precipice; or let off a gun; or went upon a water-party; or would willingly let you go if he could have helped it: neither was it recorded of him, that for lucre, or for intimidation, he ever forsook friend or principle.

Whom next shall we summon from the dusty dead, in whom common qualities become uncommon? Can I forget thee, Henry Man, the wit, the polished man of letters, the *author*, of the South-Sea House? who never enteredst thy office in a morning, or quittedst it in midday—(what didst *thou* in an office?)—without some quirk that left a sting! Thy gibes and thy jokes are now extinct, or survive but in two forgotten volumes, which I had the good fortune to rescue from a stall in

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11. **"greatly find quarrel in a straw"**: take offense at little things when one supposes his honor at stake. Cf. "Hamlet," IV, iv.

16. **water-party**: a boating party on the river.

20. **dusty dead**. Cf. "Macbeth," V, v, 22.

26. **quirk**: a witty retort.

Barbican, not three days ago, and found thee terse, fresh, epigrammatic, as alive. Thy wit is a little gone by in these fastidious days—thy topics are staled by the "new-born gauds" of the time:—but great thou used to be in Public Ledgers, and in Chronicles, upon Chatham, and Shelburne, and Rockingham, and Howe, and Burgoyne, and Clinton, and the war which ended in the tearing from Great Britain her rebellious colonies—and Keppel, and Wilkes, and Sawbridge, and Bull, and Dunning, and Pratt, and Richmond,—and such small politics.——

A little less facetious, and a great deal more obstreperous, was fine rattling, rattleheaded Plumer. He was descended—not in a right line, reader, (for his lineal pretensions, like his personal, favored a little of the sinister bend)—from the Plumers of Hertfordshire. So tradition gave him out; and certain family features not a little sanctioned the opinion. Certainly old Walter Plumer (his reputed author) had been a rake in his days, and visited much in Italy, and had seen the world. He was uncle, bachelor-uncle, to the fine old Whig still living, who has represented the county in so many successive parliaments, and has a fine old mansion near Ware. Walter flourished in George the Second's days, and was the same who was summoned before the House of Commons about a business

1. **Barbican:** a street in London, off Aldersgate Street, between Long Lane and Beech Street.

4. **"new-born gauds":** modern objects of vulgar interest. Cf. "Troilus and Cressida," III, iii, 175.

14. **right line:** the line of legitimate descent. The "sinister bend" in heraldry signified illegitimate descent.

14–15. **his lineal pretensions,** etc.: his pretensions to family, like his pretensions to good looks, were not well grounded.

25. Cave was summoned, not Plumer.

of franks, with the old Duchess of Marlborough. You may read of it in Johnson's Life of Cave. Cave came off cleverly in that business. It is certain our Plumer did nothing to discountenance the rumor. He rather seemed pleased whenever it was, with all gentleness, insinuated. But, besides his family pretensions, Plumer was an engaging fellow, and sang gloriously.——

Not so sweetly sang Plumer as thou sangest, mild, child-like, pastoral M——; a flute's breathing less divinely whispering than thy Arcadian melodies, when, in tones worthy of Arden, thou didst chant that song sung by Amiens to the banished Duke, which proclaims the winter wind more lenient than for a man to be ungrateful. Thy sire was old surly M——, the unapproachable churchwarden of Bishopsgate. He knew not what he did, when he begat thee, like spring, gentle offspring of blustering winter:—only unfortunate in thy ending, which should have been mild, conciliatory, swan-like.——

Much remains to sing. Many fantastic shapes rise up, but they must be mine in private:—already I have fooled the reader to the top of his bent;—else could I omit that strange creature Woollett, who existed in

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1. **franks:** signatures that exempt mail-matter from payment of postage.

9. **pastoral:** shepherd-like; hence simple. **M——:** Thomas Maynard, a clerk in the South-Sea House. See Lamb's Key and cf. lines 17–18. **a flute's breathing,** etc.: freely paraphrased, the soft breathing of the flute whispers a melody less divine than thy Arcadian melody.

22. **top of his bent:** to the limit of his desire. Cf. "Hamlet," III, ii, 30.

23. **who existed in trying the question:** found his chief pleasure in law suits; actually bought the legal claims of others, that he might have the pleasure of the legal contest himself.

trying the question, and *bought litigations?*—and still stranger, inimitable, solemn Hepworth, from whose gravity Newton might have deduced the law of gravitation. How profoundly would he nib a pen—with what deliberation would he wet a wafer!——

But it is time to close—night's wheels are rattling fast over me—it is proper to have done with this solemn mockery.

Reader, what if I have been playing with thee all this while—peradventure the very *names,* which I have summoned up before thee, are fantastic—insubstantial—like Henry Pimpernel, and old John Naps of Greece:——

Be satisfied that something answering to them has had a being. Their importance is from the past.

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4. **nib a pen:** to put a point on a quill pen.

5. **a wafer:** a thin disk of gummed paper or of paste used to seal letters, or receive the impression of a seal.

## II. CHRIST'S HOSPITAL FIVE-AND-THIRTY YEARS AGO

In Mr. Lamb's "Works," published a year or two since, I find a magnificent eulogy on my old school,[1] such as it was, or now appears to him to have been, between the years 1782 and 1789. It happens, very oddly, that my own standing at Christ's was nearly corresponding with his; and, with all gratitude to him for his enthusiasm for the cloisters, I think he has contrived to bring together whatever can be said in praise of them, dropping all the other side of the argument most ingeniously.

I remember L. at school; and can well recollect that he had some peculiar advantages, which I and others of his schoolfellows had not. His friends lived in town, and were near at hand; and he had the privilege of going to see them, almost as often as he wished, through some invidious distinction, which was denied to us. The present worthy sub-treasurer to the Inner Temple can explain how that happened. He had his tea and hot rolls in the morning, while we were battening upon our quarter of a penny loaf—our *crug*—moistened with attenuated small beer, in wooden piggins, smacking of

[1] "Recollections of Christ's Hospital."

11. **L.**: Lamb. Elia, in the person of Coleridge, is speaking.

21. **small beer**: beer containing little alcohol (1.28 per cent). **attenuated**: diluted.

the pitched leathern jack it was poured from. Our Monday's milk porritch, blue and tasteless, and the pease soup of Saturday, coarse and choking, were enriched for him with a slice of "extraordinary bread and butter," from the hot-loaf of the Temple. The Wednesday's mess of millet, somewhat less repugnant—(we had three banyan to four meat days in the week)—was endeared to his palate with a lump of double-refined, and a smack of ginger (to make it go down the more glibly) or the fragrant cinnamon. In lieu of our *half-pickled* Sundays, or *quite fresh* boiled beef on Thursdays (strong as *caro equina*), with detestable marigolds floating in the pail to poison the broth—our scanty mutton scrags on Fridays—and rather more savory, but grudging, portions of the same flesh, rotten-roasted or rare, on the Tuesdays (the only dish which excited our appetites, and disappointed our stomachs, in almost equal proportion)—he had his hot plate of roast veal, or the more tempting griskin (exotics unknown to our palates), cooked in the paternal kitchen (a great thing), and brought him daily by his maid or aunt! I remember the good old relative (in whom love forbade pride) squatting down upon some odd stone in a by-nook of the cloisters, disclosing the viands

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1. **pitched leathern jack:** the leather jug coated with pitch.

7. **banyan days:** the sailor's term for days when no meat is served. Banyas, Hindu traders who abstain from meat.

8–9. **double-refined:** sugar.

11. **half-pickled:** beef half corned.

12. **caro equina:** horse flesh.

14. **scrags:** lean or bony pieces of meat.

15–16. **rotten-roasted:** over-done; roasted till it falls to pieces.

19. **griskin:** the back, or chine, of a hog. **exotics:** things brought in from abroad; strange.

(of higher regale than those cates which the ravens ministered to the Tishbite); and the contending passions of L. at the unfolding. There was love for the bringer; shame for the thing brought, and the manner of its bringing; sympathy for those who were too many to share in it; and, at top of all, hunger (eldest, strongest of the passions!) predominant, breaking down the stony fences of shame, and awkwardness, and a troubling over-consciousness.

I was a poor friendless boy. My parents, and those who should care for me, were far away. Those few acquaintances of theirs, which they could reckon upon being kind to me in the great city, after a little forced notice, which they had the grace to take of me on my first arrival in town, soon grew tired of my holiday visits. They seemed to them to recur too often, though I thought them few enough; and, one after another, they all failed me, and I felt myself alone among six hundred playmates.

O the cruelty of separating a poor lad from his early homestead! The yearnings which I used to have toward it in those unfledged years! How, in my dreams, would my native town (far in the west) come back, with its church, and trees, and faces! How I would wake weeping, and in the anguish of my heart exclaim upon sweet Calne in Wiltshire!

To this late hour of my life, I trace impressions left by the recollection of those friendless holidays. The long warm days of summer never return but they bring

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1. **regale:** sumptuous feast. **cates:** delicacies.

2. **Tishbite:** Elijah. For the reference, see I Kings, xvii, 1–6.

26. **Calne in Wiltshire:** a deliberate misstatement, with purpose to mystify the reader. Coleridge's home was Ottery St. Mary, in Devonshire.

with them a gloom from the haunting memory of those *whole-day-leaves,* when, by some strange arrangement, we were turned out, for the live-long day, upon our own hands, whether we had friends to go to, or none. I remember those bathing-excursions to the New-River, which L. recalls with such relish, better, I think, than he can—for he was a home-seeking lad, and did not much care for such water-pastures:—How merrily we would sally forth into the fields; and strip under the first warmth of the sun; and wanton like young dace in the streams; getting us appetites for noon, which those of us that were penniless (our scanty morning crust long since exhausted) had not the means of allaying—while the cattle, and the birds, and the fishes, were at feed about us, and we had nothing to satisfy our cravings—the very beauty of the day, and the exercise of the pastime, and the sense of liberty, setting a keener edge upon them!—How faint and languid, finally, we would return, toward night-fall, to our desired morsel, half-rejoicing, half-reluctant, that the hours of our uneasy liberty had expired!

It was worse in the days of winter, to go prowling about the streets objectless—shivering at cold windows of print-shops, to extract a little amusement; or haply, as a last resort, in the hope of a little novelty, to pay a fifty-times repeated visit (where our individual faces should be as well known to the warden as those of his own charges) to the Lions in the Tower—to whose levée, by courtesy immemorial, we had a prescriptive title to admission.

L.'s governor (so we called the patron who pre-

28. **levée:** reception.

30. **L.'s governor:** Samuel Salt. See essay on "The Old Benchers of the Inner Temple," where he is described at length; also note on page 267.

sented us to the foundation) lived in a manner under his paternal roof. Any complaint which he had to make was sure of being attended to. This was understood at Christ's, and was an effectual screen to him against the severity of masters, or worse tyranny of the monitors. The oppressions of these young brutes are heart-sickening to call to recollection. I have been called out of my bed, and *waked for the purpose,* in the coldest winter nights—and this not once, but night after night—in my shirt, to receive the discipline of a leathern thong, with eleven other sufferers, because it pleased my callow overseer, when there has been any talking heard after we were gone to bed, to make the six last beds in the dormitory, where the youngest children of us slept, answerable for an offence they neither dared to commit, nor had the power to hinder. The same execrable tyranny drove the younger part of us from the fires, when our feet were perishing with snow; and, under the cruelest penalties, forbade the indulgence of a drink of water, when we lay in sleepless summer nights, fevered with the season, and the day's sports.

There was one H——, who, I learned, in after days, was seen expiating some maturer offence in the hulks. (Do I flatter myself in fancying that this might be the planter of that name, who suffered—at Nevis, I think, or St. Kits,—some few years since? My friend Tobin was the benevolent instrument of bringing him to the gallows.) This petty Nero actually branded a boy, who had offended him, with a red-hot iron; and

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1. **presented us to the foundation:** gained admittance for us to the school (the foundation of Edward VI).

5–6. **monitors:** senior pupils in charge of the younger.

22. **one H——.** See Lamb's Key in the Introduction.

23. **hulks:** prison ships.

nearly starved forty of us, with exacting contributions, to the one half of our bread, to pamper a young ass, which, incredible as it may seem, with the connivance of the nurse's daughter (a young flame of his) he had contrived to smuggle in, and keep upon the leads of the *ward*, as they called our dormitories. This game went on for better than a week, till the foolish beast, not able to fare well but he must cry roast meat—happier than Caligula's minion, could he have kept his own counsel—but, foolisher, alas! than any of his species in the fables—waxing fat, and kicking, in the fulness of bread, one unlucky minute would needs proclaim his good fortune to the world below; and, laying out his simple throat, blew such a ram's horn blast, as (toppling down the walls of his own Jericho) set concealment any longer at defiance. The client was dismissed, with certain attentions, to Smithfield; but I never understood that the patron underwent any censure on the occasion. This was in the stewardship of L.'s admired Perry.

Under the same *facile* administration, can L. have forgotten the cool impunity with which the nurses used to carry away openly, in open platters, for their own tables, one out of two of every hot joint, which the careful matron had been seeing scrupulously weighed out for our dinners? These things were daily prac-

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5–6. **leads of the ward:** roof of the dormitory.

11. **waxing fat, and kicking.** Cf. Deuteronomy, xxxii, 15; also see "Grace before Meat," page 132, line 12.

14–15. **(toppling down the walls of his own Jericho.)** Cf. Joshua, vi, 5.

16. **client:** here meaning the ass. **Smithfield** is the London stock market.

21. **facile:** easy-going.

ticed in that magnificent apartment, which L. (grown connoisseur since, we presume) praises so highly for the grand paintings "by Verrio, and others," with which it is "hung round and adorned." But the sight of sleek well-fed blue-coat boys in pictures was, at that time, I believe, little consolatory to him, or us, the living ones, who saw the better part of our provisions carried away before our faces by harpies; and ourselves reduced (with the Trojan in the hall of Dido)

To feed our mind with idle portraiture.

L. has recorded the repugnance of the school to *gags*, or the fat of fresh beef boiled; and sets it down to some superstition. But these unctuous morsels are never grateful to young palates (children are universally fat-haters), and in strong, coarse, boiled meats, *unsalted*, are detestable. A *gag-eater* in our time was equivalent to a *goul*, and held in equal detestation. —— suffered under the imputation:

——— 'Twas said,
He ate strange flesh.

He was observed, after dinner, carefully to gather up the remnants left at his table (not many, nor very choice fragments, you may credit me)—and, in an especial manner, these disreputable morsels, which he would convey away, and secretly stow in the settle that stood at his bed-side. None saw when he ate them. It was

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9. **Trojan in the hall of Dido:** Æneas in Queen Dido's palace at Carthage. Cf. Virgil's "Æneid," I, 464, ff.

17. **goul:** a ghoul; a spirit supposed to prey on dead bodies; hence, in general, something fiendish or unnatural.

19. Cf. "Antony and Cleopatra," I, iv, 6.

rumored that he privately devoured them in the night. He was watched, but no traces of such midnight practices were discoverable. Some reported, that, on leave-days, he had been seen to carry out of the bounds a large blue check handkerchief, full of something. This then must be the accursed thing. Conjecture next was at work to imagine how he could dispose of it. Some said he sold it to the beggars. This belief generally prevailed. He went about moping. None spake to him. No one would play with him. He was excommunicated; put out of the pale of the school. He was too powerful a boy to be beaten, but he underwent every mode of that negative punishment, which is more grievous than many stripes. Still he persevered. At length he was observed by two of his school-fellows, who were determined to get at the secret, and had traced him one leave-day for that purpose, to enter a large worn-out building, such as there exist specimens of in Chancery-lane, which are let out to various scales of pauperism with open door, and a common staircase. After him they silently slunk in, and followed by stealth up four flights, and saw him tap at a poor wicket, which was opened by an aged woman, meanly clad. Suspicion was now ripened into certainty. The informers had secured their victim. They had him in their toils. Accusation was formally preferred, and retribution most signal was looked for. Mr. Hathaway, the then steward (for this happened a little after my time) with that patient sagacity which tempered all his conduct, determined to investigate the matter, before he proceeded to sentence. The result was, that the supposed mendicants, the receivers or purchasers of the mysterious scraps, turned out to

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11. **out of the pale:** allowed no social intercourse with the boys.

be the parents of ——, an honest couple come to decay, —whom this seasonable supply had, in all probability, saved from mendicancy; and that this young stork, at the expense of his own good name, had all this while been only feeding the old birds! The governors on this occasion, much to their honor, voted a present relief to the family of ——, and presented him with a silver medal. The lesson which the steward read upon RASH JUDGMENT, on the occasion of publicly delivering the medal to ——, I believe, would not be lost upon his auditory. I had left school then, but I well remember ——. He was a tall, shambling youth, with a cast in his eye, not at all calculated to conciliate hostile prejudices. I have since seen him carrying a baker's basket. I think I heard he did not do quite so well by himself, as he had done by the old folks.

I was a hypochondriac lad; and a sight of a boy in fetters, upon the day of my first putting on the blue clothes, was not exactly fitted to assuage the natural terrors of initiation. I was of tender years, barely turned of seven; and had only read of such things in books, or seen them but in dreams. I was told he had *run away*. This was the punishment for the first offence. As a novice I was soon after taken to see the dungeons. These were little, square, Bedlam cells, where a boy could just lie at his length upon straw and a blanket—a mattress, I think, was afterwards substituted—with a peep of light, let in askance, from a prison-orifice at top, barely enough to read by. Here the poor boy was locked in by himself all day, without sight of any but the porter who brought him his bread and water—*who might not speak to him;* or of the beadle, who came

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3. **young stork.** Young storks are said to care for the old.

twice a week to call him out to receive his periodical chastisement, which was almost welcome, because it separated him for a brief interval from solitude:—and here he was shut up by himself of *nights,* out of the reach of any sound, to suffer whatever horrors the weak nerves, and superstition incident to his time of life, might subject him to.[1] This was the penalty for the second offence. Wouldst thou like, reader, to see what became of him in the next degree?

The culprit, who had been a third time an offender, and whose expulsion was at this time deemed irreversible, was brought forth, as at some solemn *auto da fé,* arrayed in uncouth and most appalling attire—all trace of his late "watchet weeds" carefully effaced, he was exposed in a jacket, resembling those which London lamplighters formerly delighted in, with a cap of the same. The effect of this divestiture was such as the ingenious devisers of it could have anticipated. With his pale and frighted features, it was as if some of those disfigurements in Dante had seized upon him. In this disguisement he was brought into the hall (*L.'s favorite state-room*), where awaited him the whole num-

[1] One or two instances of lunacy, or attempted suicide, accordingly, at length convinced the governors of the impolicy of this part of the sentence, and the midnight torture to the spirits was dispensed with. This fancy of dungeons for children was a sprout of Howard's brain, for which (saving the reverence due to Holy Paul), methinks, I could willingly spit upon his statue.

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12. **auto da fé:** act of faith. See note on San Benito, page 249.

14. **"watchet weeds":** light-blue clothes.

17. **divestiture:** removal of his blue coat (and substitution of the grotesque jacket).

20. **disfigurements in Dante:** the horrors of Hell which Dante, the Italian poet, depicts in his "Inferno" (1300).

21–22. **L.'s favorite state-room:** reference to Lamb's praise of the great hall in his former essay.

ber of his school-fellows, whose joint lessons and sports he was thenceforth to share no more; the awful presence of the steward, to be seen for the last time; of the executioner beadle, clad in his state robe for the occasion; and of two faces more, of direr import, because never but in these extremities visible. These were governors; two of whom, by choice, or charter, were always accustomed to officiate at these *Ultima Supplicia;* not to mitigate (so at least we understood it), but to enforce the uttermost stripe. Old Bamber Gascoigne, and Peter Aubert, I remember, were colleagues on one occasion, when the beadle turning rather pale, a glass of brandy was ordered to prepare him for the mysteries. The scourging was, after the old Roman fashion, long and stately. The lictor accompanied the criminal quite round the hall. We were generally too faint with attending to the previous disgusting circumstances, to make accurate report with our eyes of the degree of corporal suffering inflicted. Report, of course, gave out the back knotty and livid. After scourging, he was made over, in his *San Benito,* to his friends, if he had any (but commonly such poor runagates were friendless), or to his parish officer, who, to enhance the effect of the scene, had his station allotted to him on the outside of the hall gate.

These solemn pageantries were not played off so often as to spoil the general mirth of the community. We had plenty of exercise and recreation *after* school hours; and, for myself, I must confess, that I was never happier, than *in* them. The Upper and the Lower Grammar Schools were held in the same room; and an im-

8. **Ultima Supplicia:** extreme punishments.

15. **lictor:** a Roman official who bore the fasces and administered punishments; here, the beadle. See note on page 250.

aginary line only divided their bounds. Their character was as different as that of the inhabitants on the two sides of the Pyrenees. The Rev. James Boyer was the Upper Master; but the Rev. Matthew Field presided over that portion of the apartment of which I had the good fortune to be a member. We lived a life as careless as birds. We talked and did just what we pleased, and nobody molested us. We carried an accidence, or a grammar, for form; but, for any trouble it gave us, we might take two years in getting through the verbs deponent, and another two in forgetting all that we had learned about them. There was now and then the formality of saying a lesson, but if you had not learned it, a brush across the shoulders (just enough to disturb a fly) was the sole remonstrance. Field never used the rod; and in truth he wielded the cane with no great good-will—holding it "like a dancer." It looked in his hands rather like an emblem than an instrument of authority; and an emblem, too, he was ashamed of. He was a good easy man, that did not care to ruffle his own peace, nor perhaps set any great consideration upon the value of juvenile time. He came among us, now and then, but often stayed away whole days from us; and when he came, it made no difference to us—he had his private room to retire to, the short time he stayed, to be out of the sound of our noise. Our mirth and uproar went on. We had classics of our own, without being beholden to "insolent Greece or haughty Rome," that passed current among us—Peter Wilkins—the Ad-

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2–3. **inhabitants on the two sides of the Pyrenees**: the French and the Spaniards.

8. **accidence**: rudimentary grammar containing the inflections.

17. **"like a dancer."** From "Antony and Cleopatra," III, ii, 36.

28. **"insolent Greece or haughty Rome"**: Ben Jonson.

ventures of the Hon. Capt. Robert Boyle—the Fortunate Blue Coat Boy—and the like. Or we cultivated a turn for mechanic or scientific operations; making little sundials of paper; or weaving those ingenious parentheses, called *cat-cradles;* or making dry peas to dance upon the end of a tin pipe; or studying the art military over that laudable game "French and English," and a hundred other such devices to pass away the time—mixing the useful with the agreeable—as would have made the souls of Rousseau and John Locke chuckle to have seen us.

Matthew Field belonged to that class of modest divines who affect to mix in equal proportion the *gentleman,* the *scholar,* and the *Christian;* but, I know not how, the first ingredient is generally found to be the predominating dose in the composition. He was engaged in gay parties, or with his courtly bow at some episcopal *levée,* when he should have been attending upon us. He had for many years the classical charge of a hundred children, during the four or five first years of their education; and his very highest form seldom proceeded further than two or three of the introductory fables of Phædrus. How things were suffered to go on thus, I cannot guess. Boyer, who was the proper person to have remedied these abuses, always affected, perhaps felt, a delicacy in interfering in a province not strictly his own. I have not been without my suspicions, that he was not altogether displeased at the contrast we presented to his end of the school. We were a sort of Helots to his young Spartans. He would sometimes, with ironic deference, send to borrow a rod

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7. **"French and English":** tug-of-war.
18. **episcopal levée:** bishop's reception.

of the Under Master, and then, with sardonic grin, observe to one of his upper boys, "how neat and fresh the twigs looked." While his pale students were battering their brains over Xenophon and Plato, with a silence as deep as that enjoined by the Samite, we were enjoying ourselves at our ease in our little Goshen. We saw a little into the secrets of his discipline, and the prospect did but the more reconcile us to our lot. His thunders rolled innocuous for us; his storms came near, but never touched us; contrary to Gideon's miracle, while all around were drenched, our fleece was dry.[1] His boys turned out the better scholars; we, I suspect, have the advantage in temper. His pupils cannot speak of him without something of terror allaying their gratitude; the remembrance of Field comes back with all the soothing images of indolence, and summer slumbers, and work like play, and innocent idleness, and Elysian exemptions, and life itself a "playing holiday."

Though sufficiently removed from the jurisdiction of Boyer, we were near enough (as I have said) to understand a little of his system. We occasionally heard sounds of the *Ululantes,* and caught glances of Tartarus. B. was a rabid pedant. His English style was cramped to barbarism. His Easter anthems (for his duty obliged

[1] Cowley.

9. **thunders rolled innocuous for us:** his bursts of anger passed harmlessly over us.

10. **Gideon's miracle.** Cf. Judges, vi, 36–40.

18. **Elysian exemptions:** freedom like that enjoyed in Elysium, paradise.

23. **Ululantes:** the howling ones. **Tartarus:** Hades.

24. **rabid pedant:** one who excitedly insists on trifling points of scholarship. Lamb may use the word pedant in its obsolete sense of schoolmaster.

him to those periodical flights) were grating as scrannel pipes.[1] He would laugh, ay, and heartily, but then it must be at Flaccus's quibble about *Rex*—or at the *tris'is severitas in vultu*, or *inspicere in patinas*, of Terence —thin jests, which at their first broaching could hardly have had *vis* enough to move a Roman muscle.—He had two wigs, both pedantic, but of differing omen. The one serene, smiling, fresh powdered, betokening a mild day. The other, an old discolored, unkempt, angry caxon, denoting frequent and bloody execution. Woe to the school, when he made his morning appearance in his *passy*, or *passionate* wig. No comet expounded surer.—J. B. had a heavy hand. I have known him double his knotty fist at a poor trembling child (the maternal milk hardly dry upon its lips) with a " Sirrah, do you pre-

[1] In this and everything B. was the antipodes of his coadjutor. While the former was digging his brains for crude anthems, worth a pignut, F. would be recreating his gentlemanly fancy in the more flowery walks of the Muses. A little dramatic effusion of his, under the name of Vertumnus and Pomona, is not yet forgotten by the chroniclers of that sort of literature. It was accepted by Garrick, but the town did not give it their sanction. B. used to say of it, in a way of half-compliment, half-irony, that it was *too classical for representation.*

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1–2. **grating as scrannel pipes:** harsh as thin pipes. Cf. Milton's "Lycidas," 124.

3–4. **tristis severitas in vultu:** harsh severity of his face.

4. **inspicere in patinas:** to look into the plates.

6. **vis:** force.

9. **caxon:** a wig of the eighteenth century.

12. **no comet expounded surer.** Comets were thought to prophesy disaster.

15. **Sirrah:** fellow. A term used to inferiors, as "Sir" is used to superiors.

Footnote, line 1. **antipodes of his coadjutor:** the exact opposite of his colleague, Field. While Boyer was writing poor, heavy anthems, Field would be composing more flowery poems.

sume to set your wits at me?'' Nothing was more common than to see him make a headlong entry into the school-room, from his inner recess, or library, and, with turbulent eye, singling out a lad, roar out, '' Od's my life, sirrah '' (his favorite adjuration), '' I have a great mind to whip you,''—then, with as sudden a retracting impulse, fling back into his lair—and, after a cooling lapse of some minutes (during which all but the culprit had totally forgotten the context) drive headlong out again, piecing out his imperfect sense, as if it had been some Devil's Litany, with the expletory yell—*'' and I* WILL, *too.''*—In his gentler moods, when the *rabidus furor* was assuaged, he had resort to an ingenious method, peculiar, for what I have heard, to himself, of whipping the boy, and reading the Debates, at the same time; a paragraph, and a lash between; which in those times, when parliamentary oratory was most at a height and flourishing in these realms, was not calculated to impress the patient with a veneration for the diffuser graces of rhetoric.

Once, and but once, the uplifted rod was known to fall ineffectual from his hand—when droll squinting W——, having been caught putting the inside of the master's desk to a use for which the architect had clearly not designed it, to justify himself, with great simplicity averred, that *he did not know that the thing had been forewarned.* This exquisite irrecognition of any law antecedent to the *oral* or *declaratory,* struck so irre-

4–5. **Od's my life:** a corruption of "As God is my life."
6–7. **retracting impulse:** change of mind.
11. **Litany:** a form of responsive prayer.
13. **rabidus furor:** mad fury.
15. **Debates:** the debates in Parliament.
27–28. Failure to recognize anything as wrong against which no specific rule had been stated.

sistibly upon the fancy of all who heard it (the pedagogue himself not excepted) that remission was unavoidable.

L. has given credit to B.'s great merits as an instructor. Coleridge, in his Literary Life, has pronounced a more intelligible and ample encomium on them. The author of the Country Spectator doubts not to compare him with the ablest teachers of antiquity. Perhaps we cannot dismiss him better than with the pious ejaculation of C—— when he heard that his old master was on his death-bed—"Poor J. B.!—may all his faults be forgiven; and may he be wafted to bliss by little cherub boys, all head and wings, with no *bottoms* to reproach his sublunary infirmities."

Under him were many good and sound scholars bred. First Grecian of my time was Lancelot Pepys Stevens, kindest of boys and men, since Co-grammar-master (and inseparable companion) with Dr. T——e. What an edifying spectacle did this brace of friends present to those who remembered the anti-socialities of their predecessors! You never met the one by chance in the street without a wonder, which was quickly dissipated by the almost immediate sub-appearance of the other. Generally arm in arm, these kindly coadjutors lightened for each other the toilsome duties of their profession, and when, in advanced age, one found it convenient to retire, the other was not long in discovering that it suited him to lay down the fasces also. Oh, it is pleasant, as it is

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7. **author of the Country Spectator:** Bishop Middleton. (See page 31, lines 8–9.)

13–14. To recall with reproach his earthly weakness for whipping.

16. **Grecian:** the highest class (proficient in Greek).

18. **Dr. T——e:** Dr. Trollope, Boyer's successor.

rare, to find the same arm linked in yours at forty, which at thirteen helped it to turn over the *Cicero De Amicitia,* or some tale of Antique Friendship, which the young heart even then was burning to anticipate! Co-Grecian with S. was Th——, who has since executed with ability various diplomatic functions at the Northern courts. Th—— was a tall, dark, saturnine youth, sparing of speech, with raven locks. Thomas Fanshaw Middleton followed him (now Bishop of Calcutta), a scholar and a gentleman in his teens. He has the reputation of an excellent critic; and is author (besides the Country Spectator) of a Treatise on the Greek Article, against Sharpe. M. is said to bear his mitre high in India, where the *regni novitas* (I dare say) sufficiently justifies the bearing. A humility quite as primitive as that of Jewel or Hooker might not be exactly fitted to impress the minds of those Anglo-Asiatic diocesans with a reverence for home institutions, and the church which those fathers watered. The manners of M. at school, though firm, were mild and unassuming. Next to M. (if not senior to him) was Richards, author of the Aboriginal Britons, the most spirited of the Oxford

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2. Cicero (106–43 B.C.) On Friendship.

5. **Th——:** Thornton. (Note Lamb's deliberate misstatement. Thornton, afterwards knighted, was minister to Portugal and Brazil—southern courts.)

7. **saturnine:** gloomy; morose; born under the planet Saturn; hence, partaking of the supposed influence of this planet.

13. **bear his mitre high:** mitre, the head-dress worn by a bishop; hence, figuratively, the power of a bishop. The meaning is, to use his power as bishop with a high hand.

14. **regni novitas:** newness of rule. Cf. "Æneid," I, 563. A newly created authority must be firm to inspire respect.

17. **Anglo-Asiatic diocesans:** priests (or members) of the English Church in Asia (India).

Prize Poems; a pale, studious Grecian. Then followed poor S——, ill-fated M——! of these the Muse is silent.

> Finding some of Edward's race
> Unhappy, pass their annals by.

Come back into memory, like as thou wert in the day-spring of thy fancies, with hope like a fiery column before thee—the dark pillar not yet turned—Samuel Taylor Coleridge—Logician, Metaphysician, Bard!—How have I seen the casual passer through the Cloisters stand still, entranced with admiration (while he weighed the disproportion between the *speech* and the *garb* of the young Mirandula), to hear thee unfold, in thy deep and sweet intonations, the mysteries of Jamblichus, or Plotinus (for even in those years thou waxedst not pale at such philosophic draughts), or reciting Homer in his Greek, or Pindar—while the walls of the old Grey Friars re-echoed to the accents of the *inspired charity-boy!*—Many were the "wit-combats" (to dally awhile with the words of old Fuller) between him and C. V. Le G——, "which two I behold like a Spanish great galleon, and an English man-of-war; Master Coleridge, like the former, was built far higher in learning, solid, but slow in his performances. C. V. L., with the English man-of-war, lesser in bulk, but lighter in sailing, could turn with all tides, tack about, and take advantage of all winds, by the quickness of his wit and invention."

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2. **poor S——:** Scott, who died in an asylum. **ill-fated M——:** Maunde, expelled from school.

6–7. **fiery column . . . dark pillar.** See Exodus, xiii, 21–22.

17. **old Grey Friars.** The school was originally the Grey Friars' Monastery.

21. **galleon:** a sixteenth century three-decker.

Nor shalt thou, their compeer, be quickly forgotten, Allen, with the cordial smile, and still more cordial laugh, with which thou wert wont to make the old Cloisters shake, in thy cognition of some poignant jest of theirs; or the anticipation of some more material, and, peradventure, practical one, of thine own. Extinct are those smiles, with that beautiful countenance, with which (for thou wert the *Nireus formosus* of the school), in the days of thy maturer waggery, thou didst disarm the wrath of infuriated town-damsel, who, incensed by provoking pinch, turning tigress-like round, suddenly converted by thy angel-look, exchanged the half-formed terrible "*bl*——," for a gentler greeting —"*bless thy handsome face!*"

Next follow two, who ought to be now alive, and the friends of Elia—the junior Le G—— and F——; who impelled, the former by a roving temper, the latter by too quick a sense of neglect—ill capable of enduring the slights poor Sizars are sometimes subject to in our seats of learning—exchanged their Alma Mater for the camp; perishing, one by climate, and one on the plains of Salamanca:—Le G——, sanguine, volatile, sweet-natured; F——, dogged, faithful, anticipative of insult, warm-hearted, with something of the old Roman height about him.

Fine, frank-hearted Fr——, the present master of Hertford, with Marmaduke T——, mildest of Missionaries—and both my good friends still—close the catalogue of Grecians in my time.

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13. "**bl——**": probably "blast."

16. **junior Le G——**: Samuel Le Grice.

23. **F——**: Samuel Favell, killed in the Peninsular Campaign at the Battle of Salamanca, Spain, 1812.

26. **Fr——**: Franklin. 27. **T——**: Thompson.

## III. THE TWO RACES OF MEN

THE human species, according to the best theory I can form of it, is composed of two distinct races, *the men who borrow,* and *the men who lend.* To these two original diversities may be reduced all those impertinent classifications of Gothic and Celtic tribes, white men, black men, red men. All the dwellers upon earth, "Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites," flock hither, and do naturally fall in with one or other of these primary distinctions. The infinite superiority of the former, which I choose to designate as the *great race,* is discernible in their figure, port, and a certain instinctive sovereignty. The latter are born degraded. "He shall serve his brethren." There is something in the air of one of this cast, lean and suspicious; contrasting with the open, trusting, generous manners of the other.

Observe who have been the greatest borrowers of all ages—Alcibiades—Falstaff—Sir Richard Steele—our late incomparable Brinsley—what a family likeness in all four!

What a careless, even deportment hath your borrower! what rosy gills! what a beautiful reliance on Provi-

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4. **impertinent:** trifling; unimportant. (Rare use.)

6–7. See Acts, ii, 9.

12–13. See Genesis, ix, 25.

21. **rosy gills:** here used humorously to define the flesh about the chin. The prosperity of the borrower is shown by his fleshy "double-chin."

dence doth he manifest,—taking no more thought than lilies! What contempt for money,—accounting it (yours and mine especially) no better than dross! What a liberal confounding of those pedantic distinctions of *meum* and *tuum!* or rather, what a noble simplification of language (beyond Tooke), resolving these supposed opposites into one clear, intelligible pronoun adjective! —What near approaches doth he make to the primitive *community,*—to the extent of one half of the principal at least!—

He is the true taxer who "calleth all the world up to be taxed"; and the distance is as vast between him and *one of us,* as subsisted betwixt the Augustan Majesty and the poorest obolary Jew that paid it tribute-pittance at Jerusalem!—His exactions, too, have such a cheerful, voluntary air! So far removed from your sour parochial or state-gatherers,—those ink-horn varlets, who carry their want of welcome in their faces! He cometh to you with a smile, and troubleth you with no receipt; confining himself to no set season. Every day is his Candlemas, or his Feast of Holy Michael. He applieth the *lene tormentum* of a pleasant look to your purse,—

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1–2. Cf. Matthew, vi, 28.

5. **meum and tuum:** mine and thine.

8–9. **primitive community:** where all things are held in common. Cf. Acts, ii, 44–45. The borrower, however (line 9), applies the community plan to your half the capital, not surrendering his own.

11–12. **"calleth all the world up to be taxed."** Cf. Luke, ii, 1.

13. **one of us:** one of the lenders. **Augustan Majesty:** Augustus Cæsar, who called up the world to be taxed.

14. **obolary:** having only obols, small Greek coins, worth three cents; hence, very poor.

17. **ink-horn varlets:** scribbling under-clerks, or collectors.

22. **lene tormentum:** gentle stimulus. Cf. Horace, "Odes," III, 21, 13.

which to that gentle warmth expands her silken leaves, as naturally as the cloak of the traveler, for which sun and wind contended! He is the true Propontic which never ebbeth! The sea which taketh handsomely at each man's hand. In vain the victim, whom he delighteth to honor, struggles with destiny; he is in the net. Lend therefore cheerfully, O man ordained to lend—that thou lose not in the end, with thy worldly penny, the reversion promised. Combine not preposterously in thine own person the penalties of Lazarus and of Dives!—but, when thou seest the proper authority coming, meet it smilingly, as it were half-way. Come, a handsome sacrifice! See how light *he* makes of it! Strain not courtesies with a noble enemy.

Reflections like the foregoing were forced upon my mind by the death of my old friend, Ralph Bigod, Esq., who departed this life on Wednesday evening; dying, as he had lived, without much trouble. He boasted himself a descendant from mighty ancestors of that name, who heretofore held ducal dignities in this realm. In his actions and sentiments he belied not the stock to which he pretended. Early in life he found himself invested with ample revenues; which, with that noble disinterestedness which I have noticed as inherent in men of the *great race,* he took almost immediate measures entirely to dissipate and bring to nothing: for there is something revolting in the idea of a king holding a private purse; and the thoughts of Bigod were

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3–4. **the true Propontic which never ebbeth:** the sea of Marmora, which is not subject to tides.

9. **the reversion promised.** Cf. Proverbs, xix, 17; Ecclesiastes, xi, 1.

10–11. **Lazarus and Dives.** Cf. Luke, xvi, 19–31.

14. **Strain not courtesies:** do not hold back.

all regal. Thus furnished by the very act of disfurnishment; getting rid of the cumbersome luggage of riches, more apt (as one sings)

> To slacken virtue, and abate her edge,
> Than prompt her to do aught may merit praise,

he set forth, like some Alexander, upon his great enterprise, "borrowing and to borrow!"

In his periegesis, or triumphant progress throughout this island, it has been calculated that he laid a tithe part of the inhabitants under contribution. I reject this estimate as greatly exaggerated: but having had the honor of accompanying my friend, divers times, in his perambulations about this vast city, I own I was greatly struck at first with the prodigious number of faces we met, who claimed a sort of respectful acquaintance with us. He was one day so obliging as to explain the phenomenon. It seems, these were his tributaries; feeders of his exchequer; gentlemen, his good friends (as he was pleased to express himself), to whom he had occasionally been beholden for a loan. Their multitudes did no way disconcert him. He rather took a pride in numbering them; and, with Comus, seemed pleased to be "stocked with so fair a herd."

With such sources, it was a wonder how he contrived to keep his treasury always empty. He did it by force of an aphorism, which he had often in his mouth, that

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1–2. **furnished by the very act of disfurnishment.** The king's revenues come from popular taxation. Bigod having got rid of his private fortune is now in a position to live like a king—off others.

4–5. Cf. "Paradise Regained," II, 455.

22. **Comus:** Milton's "Comus." Cf. 151.

26. **aphorism:** proverbial saying.

"money kept longer than three days stinks." So he made use of it while it was fresh. A good part he drank away (for he was an excellent toss-pot), some he gave away, the rest he threw away, literally tossing and hurling it violently from him—as boys do burrs, or as if it had been infectious,—into ponds, or ditches, or deep holes,—inscrutable cavities of the earth:—or he would bury it (where he would never seek it again) by a river's side under some bank, which (he would facetiously observe) paid no interest—but out away from him it must go peremptorily, as Hagar's offspring into the wilderness, while it was sweet. He never missed it. The streams were perennial which fed his fisc. When new supplies became necessary, the first person that had the felicity to fall in with him, friend or stranger, was sure to contribute to the deficiency. For Bigod had an *undeniable* way with him. He had a cheerful, open exterior, a quick jovial eye, a bald forehead, just touched with gray (*cana fides*). He anticipated no excuse, and found none. And, waiving for a while my theory as to the *great race*, I would put it to the most untheorizing reader, who may at times have disposable coin in his pocket, whether it is not more repugnant to the kindliness of his nature to refuse such a one as I am describing, than to say *no* to a poor petitionary rogue (your bastard borrower), who, by his mumping visnomy, tells you, that he expects nothing better; and therefore, whose

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3. **toss-pot:** drunkard.

11. **Hagar's offspring:** Ishmael, who was sent away into the desert. See Genesis, xxi, 9–21.

13. **fisc:** royal treasury.

19. **cana fides:** pledges of honor.

26. **mumping visnomy:** countenance drawn out of shape with mumbling petitions for alms.

preconceived notions and expectations you do in reality so much less shock in the refusal.

When I think of this man; his fiery glow of heart; his swell of feeling; how magnificent, how *ideal* he was; how great at the midnight hour; and when I compare with him the companions with whom I have associated since, I grudge the saving of a few idle ducats, and think that I am fallen into the society of *lenders,* and *little men.*

To one like Elia, whose treasures are rather cased in leather covers than closed in iron coffers, there is a class of alienators more formidable than that which I have touched upon; I mean your *borrowers of books*—those mutilators of collections, spoilers of the symmetry of shelves, and creators of odd volumes. There is Comberbatch, matchless in his depredations!

That foul gap in the bottom shelf facing you, like a great eye-tooth knocked out—(you are now with me in my little back study in Bloomsbury, reader!)—with the huge Switzer-like tomes on each side (like the Guildhall giants, in their reformed posture, guardant of nothing) once held the tallest of my folios, *Opera Bonaventuræ,* choice and massy divinity, to which its two supporters (school divinity also, but of a lesser calibre,—Bellarmine, and Holy Thomas) showed but as dwarfs, itself an Ascapart!—*that* Comberbatch abstracted upon the faith of a theory he holds, which is more easy, I confess, for me to suffer by than to refute, namely, that "the

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20. **Switzer-like tomes:** large volumes, like the tall members of the Swiss Guard in the Vatican.

24. **school divinity:** nice philosophical discussions of the schoolmen, or scholastics.

26. **Ascapart:** a giant thirty feet high, a character in the old romance, "Bevis of Hampton."

title to property in a book (my Bonaventure, for instance) is in exact ratio to the claimant's powers of understanding and appreciating the same.'' Should he go on acting upon this theory, which of our shelves is safe?

The slight vacuum in the left-hand case—two shelves from the ceiling—scarcely distinguishable but by the quick eye of a loser — was whilom the commodious resting-place of Browne on Urn Burial. C. will hardly allege that he knows more about that treatise than I do, who introduced it to him, and was indeed the first (of the moderns) to discover its beauties—but so have I known a foolish lover to praise his mistress in the presence of a rival more qualified to carry her off than himself.—Just below, Dodsley's dramas want their fourth volume, where Vittoria Corombona is! The remainder nine are as distasteful as Priam's refuse sons, when the Fates *borrowed* Hector. Here stood the Anatomy of Melancholy, in sober state. — There loitered the Complete Angler; quiet as in life, by some stream side.—In yonder nook, John Buncle, a widower-volume, with '' eyes closed,'' mourns his ravished mate.

One justice I must do my friend, that if he sometimes, like the sea, sweeps away a treasure, at another time, sea-like, he throws up as rich an equivalent to match it. I have a small under-collection of this nature (my friend's gatherings in his various calls), picked up, he has forgotten at what odd places, and deposited with as little memory as mine. I take in these orphans, the

9. **C.**: Coleridge.

15. **Dodsley**: author and publisher of the eighteenth century.

16. **Vittoria Corombona**: a tragedy by Webster, reprinted by Dodsley.

twice-deserted. These proselytes of the gate are welcome as the true Hebrews. There they stand in conjunction; natives, and naturalized. The latter seem as little disposed to inquire out their true lineage as I am.—I charge no warehouse-room for these deodands, nor shall ever put myself to the ungentlemanly trouble of advertising a sale of them to pay expenses.

To lose a volume to C. carries some sense and meaning in it. You are sure that he will make one hearty meal on your viands, if he can give no account of the platter after it. But what moved thee, wayward, spiteful K., to be so importunate to carry off with thee, in spite of tears and adjurations to thee to forbear, the Letters of that princely woman, the thrice noble Margaret Newcastle?—knowing at the time, and knowing that I knew also, thou most assuredly wouldst never turn over one leaf of the illustrious folio:—what but the mere spirit of contradiction, and childish love of getting the better of thy friend?—Then, worst cut of all! to transport it with thee to the Gallican land—

Unworthy land to harbour such a sweetness,
A virtue in which all ennobling thoughts dwelt,
Pure thoughts, kind thoughts, high thoughts, her sex's wonder!

—hadst thou not thy play-books, and books of jests and fancies, about thee, to keep thee merry, even as thou

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1. **proselytes of the gate:** converts from among the Gentiles; those received from outside. Lamb welcomed these strange volumes and gave them a place in his library, not caring whence they came.

11. **spiteful K.:** James Kenney, a dramatist.

20. **Gallican land:** France, where Kenney was then living, and where, in 1822, Lamb visited him.

keepest all companies with thy quips and mirthful tales? —Child of the Green-room, it was unkindly done of thee. Thy wife, too, that part-French, better-part-English-woman!—that *she* could fix upon no other treatise to bear away, in kindly token of remembering us, than the works of Fulke Greville, Lord Brook—of which no Frenchman, nor woman of France, Italy, or England, was ever by nature constituted to comprehend a tittle! *Was there not Zimmermann on Solitude?*

Reader, if haply thou art blessed with a moderate collection, be shy of showing it; or if thy heart overfloweth to lend them, lend thy books; but let it be to such a one as S. T. C.—he will return them (generally anticipating the time appointed) with usury; enriched with annotations, tripling their value. I have had experience. Many are these precious MSS. of his—(in *matter* oftentimes, and almost in *quantity* not unfrequently, vying with the originals)—in no very clerkly hand—legible in my Daniel; in old Burton; in Sir Thomas Browne; and those abstruser cogitations of the Greville, now, alas! wandering in Pagan lands.—I counsel thee, shut not thy heart, nor thy library, against S. T. C.

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2. **the Green-room:** the waiting room for performers behind the stage of a theatre.

13. **S. T. C.:** Coleridge again, in a new character as borrower.

19. **Daniel:** Samuel Daniel (1562–1619), writer of prose and poetry, author of the "Delia Sonnets," etc.

## IV. NEW YEAR'S EVE

EVERY man hath two birthdays: two days, at least, in every year, which set him upon revolving the lapse of time, as it affects his mortal duration. The one is that which in an especial manner he termeth *his*. In the gradual desuetude of old observances, this custom of solemnizing our proper birthday hath nearly passed away, or is left to children, who reflect nothing at all about the matter, nor understand anything in it beyond cake and orange. But the birth of a New Year is of an interest too wide to be pretermitted by king or cobbler. No one ever regarded the First of January with indifference. It is that from which all date their time, and count upon what is left. It is the nativity of our common Adam.

Of all sounds of all bells—(bells, the music nighest bordering upon heaven)—most solemn and touching is the peal which rings out the Old Year. I never hear it without a gathering-up of my mind to a concentration of all the images that have been diffused over the past twelvemonth; all I have done or suffered, performed or neglected—in that regretted time. I begin to know its worth, as when a person dies. It takes a personal colour; nor was it a poetical flight in a contemporary, when he exclaimed

I saw the skirts of the departing Year.

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5. **desuetude**: falling into disuse.

25. Coleridge's "Ode to the Departing Year."

It is no more than what in sober sadness every one of us seems to be conscious of, in that awful leave-taking. I am sure I felt it, and all felt it with me, last night; though some of my companions affected rather to manifest an exhilaration at the birth of the coming year, than any very tender regrets for the decease of its predecessor. But I am none of those who—

> Welcome the coming, speed the parting guest.

I am naturally, beforehand, shy of novelties; new books, new faces, new years,—from some mental twist which makes it difficult in me to face the prospective. I have almost ceased to hope; and am sanguine only in the prospects of other (former) years. I plunge into foregone visions and conclusions. I encounter pell-mell with past disappointments. I am armour-proof against old discouragements. I forgive, or overcome in fancy, old adversaries. I play over again *for love,* as the gamesters phrase it, games, for which I once paid so dear. I would scarce now have any of those untoward accidents and events of my life reversed. I would no more alter them than the incidents of some well-contrived novel. Methinks, it is better that I should have pined away seven of my goldenest years, when I was thrall to the fair hair, and fairer eyes, of Alice W——n, than that so passionate a love-adventure should be lost. It was better that our family should have missed that legacy, which old Dorrell cheated us of, than that I should have at this moment two thousand pounds *in*

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9. "Odyssey," XV, 84. Pope's translation.
14–16. Observe the peculiar force of these lines.
18. **for love:** for no stake, but for love of the game.

*banco,* and be without the idea of that specious old rogue.

In a degree beneath manhood, it is my infirmity to look back upon those early days. Do I advance a paradox, when I say that, skipping over the intervention of forty years, a man may have leave to love *himself*, without the imputation of self-love?

If I know aught of myself, no one whose mind is introspective—and mine is painfully so—can have a less respect for his present identity, than I have for the man Elia. I know him to be light, and vain, and humoursome; a notorious * * * ; addicted to * * * ; averse from counsel, neither taking it, nor offering it;— * * * besides; a stammering buffoon; what you will; lay it on, and spare not; I subscribe to it all, and much more, than thou canst be willing to lay at his door—but for the child Elia—that "other me," there, in the background—I must take leave to cherish the remembrance of that young master—with as little reference, I protest, to this stupid changeling of five-and-forty, as if it had been a child of some other house, and not of my parents. I can cry over its patient small-pox at five, and rougher medicaments. I can lay its poor fevered head upon the sick pillow at Christ's, and wake with it in surprise at the gentle posture of maternal tenderness hanging over

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1. **in banco:** in bank. (Italian.)

11–12. **humoursome:** whimsical; unstable. See note on page 245.

12. **a notorious * * *.** Again Lamb's intimate conversational manner. Imagine the shrug of the shoulder or the gesture that would have supplied the omission of the word had Lamb been speaking.

20. **changeling.** In fairy tales the infant is sometimes stolen from the cradle by fairies, who leave in its place a weird little elf or an idiot child.

it, that unknown had watched its sleep. I know how it shrank from any the least colour of falsehood.—God help thee, Elia, how art thou changed! Thou art sophisticated.—I know how honest, how courageous (for a weakling) it was—how religious, how imaginative, how hopeful! From what have I not fallen, if the child I remember was indeed myself,—and not some dissembling guardian, presenting a false identity, to give the rule to my unpractised steps, and regulate the tone of my moral being!

That I am fond of indulging, beyond a hope of sympathy, in such retrospection, may be the symptom of some sickly idiosyncrasy. Or is it owing to another cause; simply, that being without wife or family, I have not learned to project myself enough out of myself; and having no offspring of my own to dally with, I turn back upon memory, and adopt my own early idea, as my heir and favourite? If these speculations seem fantastical to thee, reader—(a busy man, perchance), if I tread out of the way of thy sympathy, and am singularly-conceited only, I retire, impenetrable to ridicule, under the phantom cloud of Elia.

The elders, with whom I was brought up, were of a character not likely to let slip the sacred observance of any old institution: and the ringing out of the Old Year was kept by them with circumstances of peculiar ceremony.—In those days the sound of those midnight chimes, though it seemed to raise hilarity in all around me, never failed to bring a train of pensive imagery into my fancy. Yet I then scarce conceived what it meant,

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13. **sickly idiosyncrasy:** peculiar whim betokening an unhealthy state of mind.

20–21. **conceited:** in the Elizabethan sense, conceit means to think or suppose. **singularly-conceited:** possessed of peculiar notions.

or thought of it as a reckoning that concerned me. Not childhood alone, but the young man till thirty, never feels practically that he is mortal. He knows it indeed, and, if need were, he could preach a homily on the fragility of life; but he brings it not home to himself, any more than in a hot June we can appropriate to our imagination the freezing days of December. But now, shall I confess a truth?—I feel these audits but too powerfully. I begin to count the probabilities of my duration, and to grudge at the expenditure of moments and shortest periods, like miser's farthings. In proportion as the years both lessen and shorten, I set more count upon their periods, and would fain lay my ineffectual finger upon the spoke of the great wheel. I am not content to pass away "like a weaver's shuttle." Those metaphors solace me not, nor sweeten the unpalatable draught of mortality. I care not to be carried with the tide, that smoothly bears human life to eternity; and reluct at the inevitable course of destiny. I am in love with this green earth; the face of town and country; the unspeakable rural solitudes, and the sweet security of streets. I would set up my tabernacle here. I am content to stand still at the age to which I am arrived; I, and my friends: to be no younger, no richer, no hand-

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8. **audits:** reckonings; inventories.

12. **shorten:** as we grow older, the years seem to go more rapidly.

14. **great wheel:** the wheel of time.

15. **"like a weaver's shuttle."** Cf. Job, vii, 6.

16–17. **the unpalatable draught of mortality:** the bitter cup of death.

19. **reluct:** show reluctance; hold back. (Obsolete.)

22. **I would set up my tabernacle here:** make this earth my permanent abiding-place. Cf. Isaiah, xxxiii, 20: "a tabernacle that shall not be taken down."

somer. I do not want to be weaned by age; or drop, like mellow fruit, as they say, into the grave.—Any alteration, on this earth of mine, in diet or in lodging, puzzles and discomposes me. My household-gods plant a terrible fixed foot, and are not rooted up without blood. They do not willingly seek Lavinian shores. A new state of being staggers me.

Sun, and sky, and breeze, and solitary walks, and summer holidays, and the greenness of fields, and the delicious juices of meats and fishes, and society, and the cheerful glass, and candle-light, and fireside conversations, and innocent vanities, and jests, and *irony itself* —do these things go out with life?

Can a ghost laugh, or shake his gaunt sides, when you are pleasant with him?

And you, my midnight darlings, my Folios! must I part with the intense delight of having you (huge armfuls) in my embraces? Must knowledge come to me, if it come at all, by some awkward experiment of intuition, and no longer by this familiar process of reading?

Shall I enjoy friendships there, wanting the smiling indications which point me to them here,—the recognizable face—the "sweet assurance of a look"—?

In winter this intolerable disinclination to dying—to give it its mildest name—does more especially haunt and beset me. In a genial August noon, beneath a sweltering sky, death is almost problematic. At those times

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1–2. **drop, like mellow fruit.** Cf. "Paradise Lost," XI, 535.

9–10. **the delicious juices of meats and fishes.** Cf. Jeremy Taylor, "The Epicure's Feast": ". . . and suck the delicious juice of fishes, the marrow of the laborious ox, and the tender lard of the Apulian swine . . ."

24. From Royden's "Elegy on Sir Philip Sidney."

do such poor snakes as myself enjoy an immortality. Then we expand and burgeon. Then are we as strong again, as valiant again, as wise again, and a great deal taller. The blast that nips and shrinks me, puts me in thoughts of death. All things allied to the insubstantial, wait upon that master feeling; cold, numbness, dreams, perplexity; moonlight itself, with its shadowy and spectral appearances,—that cold ghost of the sun, or Phœbus's sickly sister, like that innutritious one denounced in the Canticles:—I am none of her minions— I hold with the Persian.

Whatsoever thwarts, or puts me out of my way, brings death into my mind. All partial evils, like humours, run into that capital plague-sore.—I have heard some profess an indifference to life. Such hail the end of their existence as a port of refuge; and speak of the grave as of some soft arms, in which they may slumber as on a pillow. Some have wooed death—but out upon thee, I say, thou foul, ugly phantom! I detest, abhor, execrate, and (with Friar John) give thee to six-score thousand devils, as in no instance to be excused or tolerated, but shunned as a universal viper; to be branded, proscribed, and spoken evil of! In no way can I be brought to digest thee, thou thin, melancholy *Privation,* or more frightful and confounding *Positive!*

Those antidotes, prescribed against the fear of thee, are altogether frigid and insulting, like thyself. For what satisfaction hath a man, that he shall "lie down

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2. **burgeon:** to expand; to put forth buds.

9–10. **that innutritious one denounced in the Canticles:** the sickly sister mentioned in the Song of Solomon, viii, 8.

24–25. **Privation . . . Positive.** Lamb hates death, whether regarded as merely the deprivation of life, or as the positive ending of all things; viewed as negative or positive.

with kings and emperors in death,'' who in his lifetime never greatly coveted the society of such bedfellows?—or, forsooth, that '' so shall the fairest face appear? ''—why, to comfort me, must Alice W——n be a goblin? More than all, I conceive disgust at those impertinent and misbecoming familiarities, inscribed upon your ordinary tombstones. Every dead man must take upon himself to be lecturing me with his odious truism, that '' such as he now is, I must shortly be.'' Not so shortly, friend, perhaps as thou imaginest. In the meantime I am alive. I move about. I am worth twenty of thee. Know thy betters! Thy New Years' Days are past. I survive, a jolly candidate for 1821. Another cup of wine—and while that turn-coat bell, that just now mournfully chanted the obsequies of 1820 departed, with changed notes lustily rings in a successor, let us attune to its peal the song made on a like occasion, by hearty, cheerful Mr. Cotton.

THE NEW YEAR

Hark! the cock crows, and yon bright star
Tells us, the day himself's not far;
And see where, breaking from the night,
He gilds the western hills with light.
With him old Janus doth appear,
Peeping into the future year,
With such a look as seems to say,
The prospect is not good that way.
Thus do we rise ill sights to see,
And 'gainst ourselves to prophesy;
When the prophetic fear of things
A more tormenting mischief brings,

1. **"lie down with kings,"** etc. Cf. Job, iii, 13–14. Lamb doubtless got the reference from his favorite "Urn Burial," chapter v.

28–31. We suffer more in contemplating supposed ills of the future than in enduring misfortunes that actually come to us.

More full of soul-tormenting gall,
Than direst mischiefs can befall.
But stay! but stay! methinks my sight,
Better inform'd by clearer light,
Discerns sereneness in that brow,
That all contracted seem'd but now.
His revers'd face may show distaste,
And frown upon the ills are past;
But that which this way looks is clear,
And smiles upon the New-born Year.
He looks too from a place so high,
The Year lies open to his eye;
And all the moments open are
To the exact discoverer.
Yet more and more he smiles upon
The happy revolution.
Why should we then suspect or fear
The influences of a year,
So smiles upon us the first morn,
And speaks us good so soon as born?
Plague on't! the last was ill enough,
This cannot but make better proof;
Or, at the worst, as we brush'd through
The last, why so we may this too;
And then the next in reason should
Be superexcellently good:
For the worst ills (we daily see)
Have no more perpetuity,
Than the best fortunes that do fall;
Which also bring us wherewithal
Longer their being to support,
Than those do of the other sort:

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5. **that brow**: the brow of the two-faced Janus which looks **this way** into the New Year.

25–26. Ill-luck cannot continue; if last year was unfortunate, and if this year turn out to be so, then the next must be a good year, according to every law of chance.

And who has one good year in three,
And yet repines at destiny,
Appears ungrateful in the case,
And merits not the good he has.
Then let us welcome the New Guest
With lusty brimmers of the best;
Mirth always should Good Fortune meet,
And render e'en Disaster sweet:
And though the Princess turn her back,
Let us but line ourselves with sack,
We better shall by far hold out,
Till the next Year she face about.

How say you, reader—do not these verses smack of the rough magnanimity of the old English vein? Do they not fortify like a cordial; enlarging the heart, and productive of sweet blood, and generous spirits, in the concoction? Where be those puling fears of death, just now expressed or affected?—Passed like a cloud—absorbed in the purging sunlight of clear poetry—clean washed away by a wave of genuine Helicon, your only Spa for these hypochondries—And now another cup of the generous! and a merry New Year, and many of them, to you all, my masters!

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6. **brimmers:** brimming glasses.

9. **the Princess:** Good Fortune, line 7.

10. **sack:** strong white wine of the South.

21. **Spa:** curative water; so called from Spa, a town in Belgium, celebrated for its mineral waters.

## V. A CHAPTER ON EARS

I HAVE no ear.—

Mistake me not, reader,—nor imagine that I am by nature destitute of those exterior twin appendages, hanging ornaments, and (architecturally speaking) handsome volutes to the human capital. Better my mother had never borne me.—I am, I think, rather delicately than copiously provided with those conduits; and I feel no disposition to envy the mule for his plenty, or the mole for her exactness, in those ingenious labyrinthine inlets — those indispensable side-intelligencers.

Neither have I incurred, or done anything to incur, with Defoe, that hideous disfigurement, which constrained him to draw upon assurance—to feel "quite unabashed," and at ease upon that article. I was never, I thank my stars, in the pillory; nor, if I read them aright, is it within the compass of my destiny, that I ever should be.

When therefore I say that I have no ear, you will understand me to mean—*for music.* To say that this heart never melted at the concourse of sweet sounds, would be

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5. **volutes:** scroll-like ornaments characteristic of Ionic and Corinthian capitals. See illustration in the Standard Dictionary, and note the happiness of Lamb's figure in thus comparing the human ear.

21. **concourse of sweet sounds.** Cf. "Merchant of Venice," V, i, 83–85.

a foul self-libel.—"*Water parted from the sea*" never fails to move it strangely. So does "*In Infancy.*" But they were used to be sung at her harpsichord (the old-fashioned instrument in vogue in those days) by a gentlewoman—the gentlest, sure, that ever merited the appellation—the sweetest—why should I hesitate to name Mrs. S——, once the blooming Fanny Weatheral of the Temple—who had power to thrill the soul of Elia, small imp as he was, even in his long coats; and to make him glow, tremble, and blush with a passion, that not faintly indicated the day-spring of that absorbing sentiment, which was afterwards destined to overwhelm and subdue his nature quite, for Alice W——n.

I even think that *sentimentally* I am disposed to harmony. But *organically* I am incapable of a tune. I have been practising "*God save the King*" all my life; whistling and humming of it over to myself in solitary corners; and am not yet arrived, they tell me, within many quavers of it. Yet hath the loyalty of Elia never been impeached.

I am not without suspicion that I have an undeveloped faculty of music within me. For, thrumming, in my wild way, on my friend A.'s piano, the other morning, while he was engaged in an adjoining parlour,—on his return he was pleased to say, "*he thought it could not be the maid!*" On his first surprise at hearing the keys touched in somewhat an airy and masterful way, not dreaming of me, his suspicions had lighted on *Jenny.* But a grace, snatched from a superior refine-

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1. **"Water parted from the sea"**: song from "Artaxerxes," an Italian opera adapted for the English stage.

2. **"In Infancy"**: another song from the same opera.

7. **Mrs. S——**: Mrs. Spinkes.

23. **my friend A.**: William Ayrton, a musician.

ment, soon convinced him that some being,—technically perhaps deficient, but higher informed from a principle common to all the fine arts,—had swayed the keys to a mood which Jenny, with all her (less-cultivated) enthusiasm, could never have elicited from them. I mention this as a proof of my friend's penetration, and not with any view of disparaging Jenny.

Scientifically I could never be made to understand (yet have I taken some pains) what a note in music is; or how one note should differ from another. Much less in voices can I distinguish a soprano from a tenor. Only sometimes the thorough bass I contrive to guess at, from its being supereminently harsh and disagreeable. I tremble, however, for my misapplication of the simplest terms of *that* which I disclaim. While I profess my ignorance, I scarce know what to *say* I am ignorant of. I hate, perhaps, by misnomers. *Sostenuto* and *adagio* stand in the like relation of obscurity to me; and *Sol, Fa, Mi, Re,* is as conjuring as *Baralipton.*

It is hard to stand alone—in an age like this,—(constituted to the quick and critical perception of all harmonious combinations, I verily believe, beyond all preceding ages, since Jubal stumbled upon the gamut)—to

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12. **thorough bass.** Lamb means the second bass, or lowest bass part. Look up the word in the dictionary and note Lamb's error in this use of the term. He disarms criticism, however, in lines 14–16.

17. **misnomers:** naming the thing wrongly, as in the use of the words "thorough bass."

17–18. **Sostenuto and adagio:** musical terms meaning respectively "sustained" and "slow."

19. **Sol, Fa, Mi, Re:** musical names for the notes G, F, E, D. **Baralipton:** a term in Logic, of which Lamb pretends to know nothing.

23. **Jubal stumbled upon the gamut:** Jubal discovered the musical scale. Cf. Genesis, iv, 21.

remain, as it were, singly unimpressible to the magic influences of an art which is said to have such an especial stroke at soothing, elevating, and refining the passions. —Yet rather than break the candid current of my confessions, I must avow to you, that I have received a great deal more pain than pleasure from this so cried-up faculty.

I am constitutionally susceptible of noises. A carpenter's hammer, in a warm summer noon, will fret me into more than midsummer madness. But those unconnected, unset sounds are nothing to the measured malice of music. The ear is passive to those single strokes; willingly enduring stripes, while it hath no task to con. To music it cannot be passive. It will strive—mine at least will—'spite of its inaptitude, to thrid the maze; like an unskilled eye painfully poring upon hieroglyphics. I have sat through an Italian Opera, till, for sheer pain, and inexplicable anguish, I have rushed out into the noisiest places of the crowded streets, to solace myself with sounds, which I was not obliged to follow, and get rid of the distracting torment of endless, fruitless, barren attention! I take refuge in the unpretending assemblage of honest common-life sounds;—and the purgatory of the Enraged Musician becomes my paradise.

I have sat at an Oratorio (that profanation of the purposes of the cheerful playhouse) watching the faces of

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3. **stroke**: influence. (Obsolete.)

10. **midsummer madness.** Cf. "Twelfth Night," III, iv, 61.

15. **thrid**: thread. (Obsolete.)

16–17. **hieroglyphics**: picture writings.

24. **Enraged Musician**: the title of one of Hogarth's prints, depicting a musician listening to a street band.

26. **Oratorio**: a semi-dramatic musical composition for voices and orchestra.

the auditory in the pit (what a contrast to Hogarth's Laughing Audience!) immovable, or affecting some faint emotion,—till (as some have said, that our occupations in the next world will be but a shadow of what delighted us in this) I have imagined myself in some cold Theatre in Hades, where some of the *forms* of the earthly one should be kept up, with none of the *enjoyment;* or like that—

——— Party in a parlour,
All silent, and all DAMNED!

Above all, those insufferable concertos, and pieces of music, as they are called, do plague and embitter my apprehension.—Words are something; but to be exposed to an endless battery of mere sounds; to be long a dying, to lie stretched upon a rack of roses; to keep up languor by unintermitted effort; to pile honey upon sugar, and sugar upon honey, to an interminable tedious sweetness; to fill up sound with feeling, and strain ideas to keep pace with it; to gaze on empty frames, and be forced to make the pictures for yourself; to read a book *all stops,* and be obliged to supply the verbal matter; to invent extempore tragedies to answer to the vague gestures of an inexplicable rambling mime—these are faint shadows of what I have undergone from a series of the ablest-executed pieces of this empty *instrumental music.*

I deny not, that in the opening of a concert, I have experienced something vastly lulling and agreeable:—

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9. **Party in a parlour,** etc.: lines from Wordsworth's "Peter Bell" as originally published; omitted from later editions.

11. **concerto:** a musical composition in several movements, in which one instrument takes the leading part to orchestral accompaniment.

20. **all stops:** all punctuation marks.

23. **mime:** mimic drama, or pantomime.

afterwards followeth the languor, and the oppression. Like that disappointing book in Patmos; or, like the comings on of melancholy, described by Burton, doth music make her first insinuating approaches:—"Most pleasant it is to such as are melancholy given, to walk alone in some solitary grove, betwixt wood and water, by some brook side, and to meditate upon some delightsome and pleasant subject, which shall affect him most, *amabilis insania*, and *mentis gratissimus error*. A most incomparable delight to build castles in the air, to go smiling to themselves, acting an infinite variety of parts, which they suppose, and strongly imagine, they act, or that they see done.—So delightsome these toys at first, they could spend whole days and nights without sleep, even whole years in such contemplations, and fantastical meditations, which are like so many dreams, and will hardly be drawn from them—winding and unwinding themselves as so many clocks, and still pleasing their humours, until at last the SCENE TURNS UPON A SUDDEN, and they being now habitated to such meditations and solitary places, can endure no company, can think of nothing but harsh and distasteful subjects. Fear, sorrow, suspicion, *subrusticus pudor*, discontent, cares, and weariness of life, surprise them on a sudden, and they can think of nothing else: continually suspecting, no sooner are their eyes open, but this infernal plague of

2. **that disappointing book in Patmos.** See Revelation, x, 10. **Patmos:** the island on which St. John wrote the Revelation.

3. **described by Burton.** See note on page 254.

9. **amabilis insania:** a pleasing madness. **mentis gratissimus error:** most delightful delusion.

13. **toys:** amusements.

16–17. **will hardly be drawn from them:** can with difficulty be turned aside from these day dreams.

23. **subrusticus pudor:** rustic shyness.

melancholy seizeth on them, and terrifies their souls, representing some dismal object to their minds; which now, by no means, no labour, no persuasions, they can avoid, they cannot be rid of, they cannot resist.''

Something like this '' SCENE-TURNING '' I have experienced at the evening parties, at the house of my good Catholic friend *Nov*——; who, by the aid of a capital organ, himself the most finished of players, converts his drawing-room into a chapel, his week days into Sundays, and these latter into minor heavens.[1]

When my friend commences upon one of those solemn anthems, which peradventure struck upon my heedless ear, rambling in the side aisles of the dim abbey, some five and thirty years since, waking a new sense, and putting a soul of old religion into my young apprehension —(whether it be *that*, in which the psalmist, weary of the persecutions of bad men, wisheth to himself dove's wings—or *that other*, which, with a like measure of sobriety and pathos, inquireth by what means the young man shall best cleanse his mind)—a holy calm pervadeth me.—I am for the time

——— rapt above earth,
And possess joys not promised at my birth.

But when this master of the spell, not content to have laid a soul prostrate, goes on, in his power, to inflict more bliss than lies in her capacity to receive,—im-

[1] I have been there, and still would go;
'Tis like a little heaven below.—*Dr. Watts.*

17–18. " O for the wings of a dove! "—Psalm lv, 6. Probably a reference to Mendelssohn's well-known anthem.

19. **by what means,** etc.: " Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? "—Psalm cxix, 9.

22–23. Cf. Walton's " Complete Angler," I, iv.

patient to overcome her "earthly" with his "heavenly,"—still pouring in, for protracted hours, fresh waves and fresh from the sea of sound, or from that inexhausted *German* ocean, above which, in triumphant progress, dolphin-seated, ride those Arions *Haydn* and *Mozart*, with their attendant tritons, *Bach*, *Beethoven*, and a countless tribe, whom to attempt to reckon up would but plunge me again in the deeps,—I stagger under the weight of harmony, reeling to and fro at my wit's end;—clouds, as of frankincense, oppress me—priests, altars, censers, dazzle before me—the genius of *his* religion hath me in her toils—a shadowy triple tiara invests the brow of my friend, late so naked, so ingenuous—he is Pope,—and by him sits, like as in the anomaly of dreams, a she-Pope too,—tri-coroneted like himself!—I am converted, and yet a Protestant;—at once *malleus hereticorum*, and myself grand heresiarch: or three heresies centre in my person: I am Marcion, Ebion, and Cerinthus—Gog and Magog—what not?—till the coming in of the friendly supper-tray dissipates the figment, and a draught of true Lutheran beer (in

4. **German ocean:** because of the great number of German composers.

11–12. **the genius of his religion:** the spirit of Novello's religion, Roman Catholic, possesses Lamb as Novello weaves the spell by his playing upon the organ.

12. **shadowy triple tiara:** the triple crown of the popes, seen as in a dream.

15. **the anomaly of dreams:** the absurd situations that present themselves in dreams. **she-Pope:** Mrs. Novello.

17. **grand heresiarch:** chief heretic.

18–19. **Marcion, Ebion, and Cerinthus:** teachers and founders of heretical sects in the first and second centuries. See Century Cyclopedia.

19. **Gog and Magog.** See note on page 253.

20–21. **dissipates the figment:** scatters this disordered conception of things.

which chiefly my friend shows himself no bigot) at once reconciles me to the rationalities of a purer faith; and restores to me the genuine unterrifying aspects of my pleasant-countenanced host and hostess.

P.S.—A writer, whose real name it seems is *Boldero*, but who has been entertaining the town for the last twelve months with some very pleasant lucubrations under the assumed signature of *Leigh Hunt*,[1] in his "Indicator" of the 31st January last has thought fit to insinuate that I, *Elia*, do not write the little sketches which bear my signature in this magazine, but that the true author of them is a Mr. L——b. Observe the critical period at which he has chosen to impute the calumny,—on the very eve of the publication of our last number,—affording no scope for explanation for a full month; during which time I must needs lie writhing and tossing under the cruel imputation of nonentity. Good Heavens! that a plain man must not be allowed *to be*——

They call this an age of personality; but surely this spirit of anti-personality (if I may so express it) is something worse.

Take away my moral reputation,—I may live to discredit that calumny; injure my literary fame,—I may write that up again; but, when a gentleman is robbed of his identity, where is he?

Other murderers stab but at our existence, a frail

[1] Clearly a fictitious appellation; for, if we admit the latter of these names to be in a manner English, what is *Leigh?* Christian nomenclature knows no such.

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5. **Boldero:** Leigh Hunt's pen-name.
7. **lucubrations:** meditations.
13–14. **impute the calumny:** insinuate the slander.
17. **imputation of nonentity:** a charge of non-existence.

and perishing trifle at the best; but here is an assassin who aims at our very essence; who not only forbids us *to be* any longer, but *to have been* at all. Let our ancestors look to it.

Is the parish register nothing? Is the house in Princes Street, Cavendish Square, where we saw the light six-and-forty years ago, nothing? Were our progenitors from stately Genoa, where we flourished four centuries back, before the barbarous name of Boldero [1] was known to a European mouth, nothing? Was the goodly scion of our name, transplanted into England in the reign of the seventh Henry, nothing? Are the archives of the steelyard, in succeeding reigns (if haply they survive the fury of our envious enemies), showing that we flourished in prime repute, as merchants, down to the period of the Commonwealth, nothing?

> Why, then the world, and all that's in 't, is nothing;
> The covering sky is nothing; Bohemia nothing.

I am ashamed that this trifling writer should have power to move me so.

[1] It is clearly of transatlantic origin.

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5 ff. All, of course, pure fiction, in Lamb's most serious vein.

## VI. A QUAKERS' MEETING

Still-born Silence! thou that art
Flood-gate of the deeper heart!
Offspring of a heavenly kind!
Frost o' the mouth, and thaw o' the mind!
Secrecy's confidant, and he
Who makes religion mystery!
Admiration's speaking'st tongue!
Leave, thy desert shades among,
Reverend hermits' hallow'd cells,
Where retired devotion dwells!
With thy enthusiasms come,
Seize our tongues, and strike us dumb!

—FLECKNO.[1]

READER, wouldst thou know what true peace and quiet mean; wouldst thou find a refuge from the noises and clamours of the multitude; wouldst thou enjoy at once solitude and society; wouldst thou possess the depth of thy own spirit in stillness, without being shut out from the consolatory faces of thy species; wouldst thou be alone, and yet accompanied; solitary, yet not desolate;

[1] "Love's Dominion."

1. **Still-born:** an intensive; properly, dead at birth.

2. **Flood-gate of the deeper heart:** outlet for the overswelling emotions.

4. **Frost o' the mouth,** etc.: the mouth is sealed, but the spirit within is being warmed by the grateful silence.

7. **Admiration's speaking'st tongue:** admiration is most eloquently shown by rapt and silent attention.

singular, yet not without some to keep thee in countenance; a unit in aggregate; a simple in composite:—come with me into a Quakers' Meeting.

Dost thou love silence as deep as that "before the winds were made?" go not out into the wilderness, descend not into the profundities of the earth; shut not up thy casements; nor pour wax into the little cells of thy ears, with little-faithed self-mistrusting Ulysses.—Retire with me into a Quakers' Meeting.

For a man to refrain even from good words, and to hold his peace, it is commendable; but for a multitude, it is great mastery.

What is the stillness of the desert, compared with this place? what the uncommunicating muteness of fishes? —here the goddess reigns and revels.—"Boreas, and Cesias, and Argestes loud," do not with their interconfounding uproars more augment the brawl—nor the waves of the blown Baltic with their clubbed sounds—than their opposite (Silence her sacred self) is multiplied and rendered more intense by nûmbers, and by sympathy. She too hath her deeps, that call unto deeps. Negation itself hath a positive more and less; and closed eyes would seem to obscure the great obscurity of midnight.

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1–2. **keep thee in countenance:** give you assurance and support.

7. **casements:** the outer ear, as distinguished, perhaps, from the inner, into which Ulysses poured wax. Cf. "Merchant of Venice," II, v, 34.

15–16. **"Boreas, and Cesias, and Argestes loud."** Cf. "Paradise Lost," X, 699. These are respectively the names for the north, the north-east, and the north-west winds.

18. **clubbed:** united.

22. **Negation itself hath a positive:** qualities purely negative may be compared sometimes.

There are wounds which an imperfect solitude cannot heal. By imperfect I mean that which a man enjoyeth by himself. The perfect is that which he can sometimes attain in crowds, but nowhere so absolutely as in a Quakers' Meeting.—Those first hermits did certainly understand this principle, when they retired into Egyptian solitudes, not singly, but in shoals, to enjoy one another's want of conversation. The Carthusian is bound to his brethren by this agreeing spirit of incommunicativeness. In secular occasions, what so pleasant as to be reading a book through a long winter evening, with a friend sitting by—say, a wife—he, or she, too (if that be probable), reading another, without interruption, or oral communication?—can there be no sympathy without the gabble of words?—away with this inhuman, shy, single, shade-and-cavern-haunting solitariness. Give me, Master Zimmermann, a sympathetic solitude.

To pace alone in the cloisters, or side aisles of some cathedral, time-stricken;

> Or under hanging mountains,
> Or by the fall of fountains;

is but a vulgar luxury, compared with that which those enjoy, who come together for the purposes of more complete, abstracted solitude. This is the loneliness "to be felt."—The Abbey Church of Westminster hath nothing so solemn, so spirit-soothing, as the naked walls and benches of a Quakers' Meeting. Here are no tombs, no inscriptions,

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17. **Master Zimmermann.** See note on page 255.
21–22. Cf. Pope's "Ode on St. Cecilia's Day."
26. **"to be felt."** Cf. Exodus, x, 21.

——— sands, ignoble things,
Dropt from the ruin'd sides of kings—

but here is something, which throws Antiquity herself into the foreground—SILENCE—eldest of things—language of old Night—primitive Discourser—to which the insolent decays of mouldering grandeur have but arrived by a violent, and, as we may say, unnatural progression.

How reverend is the view of these hush'd heads,
Looking tranquillity!

Nothing-plotting, nought-caballing, unmischievous synod! convocation without intrigue! parliament without debate! what a lesson dost thou read to council, and to consistory!—if my pen treat of you lightly—as haply it will wander—yet my spirit hath gravely felt the wisdom of your custom, when sitting among you in deepest peace, which some out-welling tears would rather confirm than disturb, I have reverted to the times of your beginnings, and the sowings of the seed by Fox and Dewesbury.—I have witnessed that, which brought before my eyes your heroic tranquillity, inflexible to the rude jests and serious violences of the insolent soldiery, republican or royalist, sent to molest you—for

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1–2. From "Lines on the Tombs in Westminster Abbey," by Beaumont.

6. **insolent decays**: insolent in pretending to be old in comparison with a thing so old as silence. Note the highly forceful and poetical quality of such epithets as "insolent" in this line, "time-stricken" on page 65, line 20, and "violent" in line 7.

11–14. Church councils, synods, and consistories are so many times the scenes of plotting and caballing by ambitious clerics who seek a higher office, that the peaceful serenity of a Quakers' Meeting is a rebuke by comparison.

ye sate betwixt the fires of two persecutions, the outcast and off-scouring of church and presbytery.—I have seen the reeling sea-ruffian, who had wandered into your receptacle, with the avowed intention of disturbing your quiet, from the very spirit of the place receive in a moment a new heart, and presently sit among ye as a lamb amidst lambs. And I remember Penn before his accusers, and Fox in the bail-dock, where he was lifted up in spirit, as he tells us, and "the Judge and the Jury became as dead men under his feet."

Reader, if you are not acquainted with it, I would recommend to you, above all church-narratives, to read Sewel's History of the Quakers. It is in folio, and is the abstract of the journals of Fox, and the primitive Friends. It is far more edifying and affecting than anything you will read of Wesley and his colleagues. Here is nothing to stagger you, nothing to make you mistrust, no suspicion of alloy, no drop or dreg of the worldly or ambitious spirit. You will here read the true story of that much-injured, ridiculed man (who perhaps hath been a by-word in your mouth),—James Naylor: what dreadful sufferings, with what patience, he endured, even to the boring through of his tongue with red-hot irons without a murmur; and with what strength of mind, when the delusion he had fallen into, which they stigmatized for blasphemy, had given way to clearer thoughts, he could renounce his error, in a strain of the beautifullest humility, yet keep his first

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4. **receptacle:** place of meeting.

8. **bail-dock:** at the Old Bailey, in London, a small room, open at the top, cut off from one of the corners of the court.

13. **Sewel,** William (1650–1725).

16. **Wesley,** John (1703–1771), the founder of Methodism.

18. **suspicion of alloy:** no least trace of the worldly spirit.

grounds, and be a Quaker still!—so different from the practice of your common converts from enthusiasm, who, when they apostatize, *apostatize all,* and think they can never get far enough from the society of their former errors, even to the renunciation of some saving truths, with which they had been mingled, not implicated.

Get the Writings of John Woolman by heart; and love the early Quakers.

How far the followers of these good men in our days have kept to the primitive spirit, or in what proportion they have substituted formality for it, the Judge of Spirits can alone determine. I have seen faces in their assemblies, upon which the dove sate visibly brooding. Others again I have watched, when my thoughts should have been better engaged, in which I could possibly detect nothing but a blank inanity. But quiet was in all, and the disposition to unanimity, and the absence of the fierce controversial workings.—If the spiritual pretensions of the Quakers have abated, at least they make few pretences. Hypocrites they certainly are not, in their preaching. It is seldom indeed that you shall see one get up amongst them to hold forth. Only now and then a trembling, female, generally *ancient,* voice is heard—you cannot guess from what part of the meeting it proceeds—with a low, buzzing, musical sound, laying out a few words which "she thought might suit the condition of some present," with a quaking diffidence, which leaves no possibility of supposing that anything of female vanity was mixed up, where the

3. **apostatize:** renounce.

14. **dove sate visibly brooding.** Cf. Matthew, iii, 16.

18–19. **absence of fierce controversial workings.** Cf. page 66, lines 11–14, and footnote.

tones were so full of tenderness, and a restraining modesty.—The men, from what I have observed, speak seldomer.

Once only, and it was some years ago, I witnessed a sample of the old Foxian orgasm. It was a man of giant stature, who, as Wordsworth phrases it, might have danced "from head to foot equipt in iron mail." His frame was of iron too. But *he* was malleable. I saw him shake all over with the spirit—I dare not say, of delusion. The strivings of the outer man were unutterable—he seemed not to speak, but to be spoken from. I saw the strong man bowed down, and his knees to fail—his joints all seemed loosening—it was a figure to set off against Paul Preaching—the words he uttered were few, and sound—he was evidently resisting his will—keeping down his own word-wisdom with more mighty effort, than the world's orators strain for theirs. "He had been a WIT in his youth," he told us, with expressions of a sober remorse. And it was not till long after the impression had begun to wear away, that I was enabled, with something like a smile, to recall the striking incongruity of the confession—understanding the term in its worldly acceptation—with the frame and physiognomy of the person before me. His brow would have scared away the Levities—the Jocos Risus-

5. **old Foxian orgasm:** the religious excitement of Fox's time.

8. **malleable:** said of iron that may be shaped without breaking; hence, susceptible to the force of surrounding influences.

11–12. **to be spoken from:** the spirit possessing him seemed to use him as a mouthpiece. Cf. the picture in "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner," when the troop of wandering spirits possesses the bodies of the dead mariners, and "sweet sounds rose slowly through their mouths, and from their bodies passed." (Lines 352–3.)

25. **Levities:** frivolous things. **Jocos Risus-que:** jests and laughter.

que—faster than the Loves fled the face of Dis at Enna. —By *wit,* even in his youth, I will be sworn he understood something far within the limits of an allowable liberty.

More frequently the Meeting is broken up without a word having been spoken. But the mind has been fed. You go away with a sermon, not made with hands. You have been in the milder caverns of Trophonius; or as in some den, where that fiercest and savagest of all wild creatures, the TONGUE, that unruly member, has strangely lain tied up and captive. You have bathed with stillness.—O when the spirit is sore fretted, even tired to sickness of the janglings, and nonsense-noises of the world, what a balm and a solace it is, to go and seat yourself, for a quiet half-hour, upon some undisputed corner of a bench, among the gentle Quakers!

Their garb and stillness conjoined, present an uniformity, tranquil and herd-like—as in the pasture—"forty feeding like one."——

The very garments of a Quaker seem incapable of receiving a soil; and cleanliness in them to be something more than the absence of its contrary. Every Quakeress is a lily; and when they come up in bands to their Whitsun-conferences, whitening the easterly streets of the metropolis, from all parts of the United Kingdom, they show like troops of the Shining Ones.

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10. **that unruly member.** Cf. James, iii, 5–8.

19. **"forty feeding like one":** Wordsworth's poem beginning, "The cock is crowing."

26. **Shining Ones:** angels. Cf. "Pilgrim's Progress," I.

## VII. MY RELATIONS

I AM arrived at that point of life, at which a man may account it a blessing, as it is a singularity, if he have either of his parents surviving. I have not that felicity—and sometimes think feelingly of a passage in "Browne's Christian Morals," where he speaks of a man that hath lived sixty or seventy years in the world. "In such a compass of time," he says, "a man may have a close apprehension what it is to be forgotten, when he hath lived to find none who could remember his father, or scarcely the friends of his youth, and may sensibly see with what a face in no long time OBLIVION will look upon himself."

I had an aunt, a dear and good one. She was one whom single blessedness had soured to the world. She often used to say, that I was the only thing in it which she loved; and, when she thought I was quitting it, she grieved over me with mother's tears. A partiality quite so exclusive my reason cannot altogether approve. She was from morning till night poring over good books, and devotional exercises. Her favourite volumes were Thomas à Kempis, in Stanhope's Translation; and a Roman Catholic Prayer-Book, with the *matins* and *complines* regularly set down,—terms which I was at that

14. **single blessedness:** the happy condition of spinsterhood.

22. **matins:** the early morning service of the Roman Catholic church.

22–23. **complines:** the last service of the day, held after vespers.

time too young to understand. She persisted in reading them, although admonished daily concerning their Papistical tendency; and went to church every Sabbath, as a good Protestant should do. These were the only books she studied; though, I think, at one period of her life, she told me she had read with great satisfaction the "Adventures of an Unfortunate Young Nobleman." Finding the door of the chapel in Essex Street open one day—it was in the infancy of that heresy—she went in, liked the sermon, and the manner of worship, and frequented it at intervals for some time after. She came not for doctrinal points, and never missed them. With some little asperities in her constitution, which I have above hinted at, she was a steadfast, friendly being, and a fine *old Christian.* She was a woman of strong sense, and a shrewd mind—extraordinary at a *repartée;* one of the few occasions of her breaking silence—else she did not much value wit. The only secular employment I remember to have seen her engaged in, was, the splitting of French beans, and dropping them into a China basin of fair water. The odour of those tender vegetables to this day comes back upon my sense, redolent of soothing recollections. Certainly it is the most delicate of culinary operations.

Male aunts, as somebody calls them, I had none—to remember. By the uncle's side I may be said to have been born an orphan. Brother, or sister, I never had any—to know them. A sister, I think, that should have been Elizabeth, died in both our infancies. What a comfort, or what a care, may I not have missed in her!—But I have cousins, sprinkled about in Hertfordshire—besides

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3. **Papistical tendency:** tendency toward the practices of the Roman church.

*two*, with whom I have been all my life in habits of the closest intimacy, and whom I may term cousins *par excellence*. These are James and Bridget Elia. They are older than myself by twelve, and ten, years; and neither of them seems disposed, in matters of advice and guidance, to waive any of the prerogatives which primogeniture confers. May they continue still in the same mind; and when they shall be seventy-five, and seventy-three, years old (I cannot spare them sooner), persist in treating me in my grand climacteric precisely as a stripling, or younger brother!

James is an inexplicable cousin. Nature hath her unities, which not every critic can penetrate; or, if we feel, we cannot explain them. The pen of Yorick, and of none since his, could have drawn J. E. entire—those fine Shandean lights and shades, which make up his story. I must limp after in my poor antithetical manner, as the fates have given me grace and talent. J. E. then—to the eye of a common observer at least—seemeth made up of contradictory principles.—The genuine child of impulse, the frigid philosopher of prudence—the phlegm of my cousin's doctrine is invariably at war with his temperament, which is high sanguine. With always some fire-new project in his brain, J. E. is the systematic opponent of innovation, and crier-down of

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2–3. **par excellence:** beyond all others.

6–7. **waive any of the prerogatives which primogeniture confers:** do away with any of the privileges which belong to the first born.

10. **grand climacteric:** at the age of sixty-three. Climacteric periods in human life—periods of critical change in the body—were formerly supposed to come with the years that were multiples of seven or nine.

17. **my poor antithetical manner:** my weak characterizations as compared with the strong ones Sterne might have drawn.

22. **phlegm of my cousin's doctrine,** etc. See note on page 245.

everything that has not stood the test of age and experiment. With a hundred fine notions chasing one another hourly in his fancy, he is startled at the least approach to the romantic in others; and, determined by his own sense in everything, commends *you* to the guidance of common sense on all occasions.—With a touch of the eccentric in all which he does, or says, he is only anxious that *you* should not commit yourself by doing anything absurd or singular. On my once letting slip at table, that I was not fond of a certain popular dish, he begged me at any rate not to *say* so—for the world would think me mad. He disguises a passionate fondness for works of high art (whereof he hath amassed a choice collection), under the pretext of buying only to sell again—that his enthusiasm may give no encouragement to yours. Yet, if it were so, why does that piece of tender, pastoral Domenichino hang still by his wall?—is the ball of his sight much more dear to him?—or what picture-dealer can talk like him?

Whereas mankind in general are observed to warp their speculative conclusions to the bent of their individual humours, *his* theories are sure to be in diametrical opposition to his constitution. He is courageous as Charles of Sweden, upon instinct; chary of his person, upon principle, as a travelling Quaker.—He has been preaching up to me, all my life, the doctrine of bowing to the great—the necessity of forms, and manner, to a man's getting on in the world. He himself never aims at either, that I can discover,—and has a spirit, that would stand upright in the presence of the Cham of Tartary. It is pleasant to hear him discourse of pa-

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17. **Domenichino:** a painting by Domenico Zampieri (1581–1641), an Italian artist.

tience—extolling it as the truest wisdom—and to see him during the last seven minutes that his dinner is getting ready. Nature never ran up in her haste a more restless piece of workmanship than when she moulded this impetuous cousin—and Art never turned out a more elaborate orator than he can display himself to be, upon his favourite topic of the advantage of quiet, and contentedness in the state, whatever it be, that we are placed in. He is triumphant on this theme, when he has you safe in one of those short stages that ply for the western road, in a very obstructing manner, at the foot of John Murray's street—where you get in when it is empty, and are expected to wait till the vehicle hath completed her just freight—a trying three quarters of an hour to some people. He wonders at your fidgetiness —" where could we be better than we are, *thus sitting, thus consulting?* "—" prefers, for his part, a state of rest to locomotion,"—with an eye all the while upon the coachman—till at length, waxing out of all patience, at *your want of it*, he breaks out into a pathetic remonstrance at the fellow for detaining us so long over the time which he had professed, and declares peremptorily, that " the gentleman in the coach is determined to get out, if he does not drive on that instant."

Very quick at inventing an argument, or detecting a sophistry, he is incapable of attending *you* in any chain of arguing. Indeed he makes wild work with logic; and seems to jump at most admirable conclusions by some process, not at all akin to it. Consonantly enough to this, he hath been heard to deny, upon certain occasions, that there exists such a faculty at all in man as *reason;*

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16–17. **thus sitting, thus consulting.** Cf. " Paradise Lost," II, 164.

29–30. **Consonantly enough to this:** in the same vein with this.

and wondereth how man came first to have a conceit of it—enforcing his negation with all the might of *reasoning* he is master of. He has some speculative notions against laughter, and will maintain that laughing is not natural to *him*—when peradventure the next moment his lungs shall crow like Chanticleer. He says some of the best things in the world—and declareth that wit is his aversion. It was he who said, upon seeing the Eton boys at play in their grounds—*What a pity to think, that these fine ingenuous lads in a few years will all be changed into frivolous Members of Parliament!*

His youth was fiery, glowing, tempestuous—and in age he discovereth no symptom of cooling. This is that which I admire in him. I hate people who meet Time half-way. I am for no compromise with that inevitable spoiler. While he lives, J. E. will take his swing.—It does me good, as I walk towards the street of my daily avocation, on some fine May morning, to meet him marching in a quite opposite direction, with a jolly handsome presence, and shining sanguine face, that indicates some purchase in his eye—a Claude—or a Hobbima—for much of his enviable leisure is consumed at Christie's, and Phillips's—or where not, to pick up pictures, and such gauds. On these occasions he mostly stoppeth me, to read a short lecture on the advantage a person like me possesses above himself, in having his

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1–2. **to have a conceit of it**: to have an idea of it.

6. **his lungs shall crow like Chanticleer.** Cf. "As You Like It," II, vii, 30.

21. **Claude**: French landscape painter of the seventeenth century.

21–22. **Hobbima**: Dutch artist of the seventeenth century.

23. **Christie's, and Phillips's**: English artists who had studios and salesrooms in London.

time occupied with business which he *must do*—assureth me that he often feels it hang heavy on his hands—wishes he had fewer holidays—and goes off—Westward Ho!—chanting a tune to Pall Mall—perfectly convinced that he has convinced me—while I proceed in my opposite direction tuneless.

It is pleasant again to see this Professor of Indifference doing the honours of his new purchase, when he has fairly housed it. You must view it in every light, till *he* has found the best—placing it at this distance, and at that, but always suiting the focus of your sight to his own. You must spy at it through your fingers, to catch the aërial perspective—though you assure him that to you the landscape shows much more agreeable without that artifice. Woe be to the luckless wight, who does not only not respond to his rapture, but who should drop an unseasonable intimation of preferring one of his anterior bargains to the present!—The last is always his best hit—his "Cynthia of the minute."—Alas! how many a mild Madonna have I known to *come in*—a Raphael!—keep its ascendancy for a few brief moons—then, after certain intermedial degradations, from the front drawing-room to the back gallery, thence to the

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3–4. **Westward Ho!**: the old cry of the Thames boatmen, indicating the direction of their boats in their call for passengers. The West End of London is the fashionable quarter, and **Pall Mall** (pronounced Pell Mell) is the fashionable street.

13. **aërial perspective**: indication of relative distances of objects by gradation of color.

19. **"Cynthia of the minute."** Cf. Pope's "Epistles," II, 19. Pope is referring to the appearance of the moon (Cynthia) through the clouds at a given moment of time.

22. **intermedial degradations**: slight falls in his estimation that intervened between his first glory in the picture as a probable Raphael, and its final consignment to the lumber-room as merely

dark parlour,—adopted in turn by each of the Carracci, under successive lowering ascriptions of filiation, mildly breaking its fall—consigned to the oblivious lumber-room, *go out* at last a Lucca Giordano, or plain Carlo Maratti!—which things when I beheld—musing upon the chances and mutabilities of fate below—hath made me to reflect upon the altered condition of great personages, or that woful queen of Richard the Second—

> —— set forth in pomp,
> She came adornèd hither like sweet May.
> Sent back like Hallowmas or shortest day.

With great love for *you,* J. E. hath but a limited sympathy with what you feel or do. He lives in a world of his own, and makes slender guesses at what passes in your mind. He never pierces the marrow of your habits. He will tell an old-established play-goer, that Mr. Such-a-one, of So-and-so (naming one of the theatres), is a very lively comedian—as a piece of news! He advertised me but the other day of some pleasant green lanes which he had found out for me, *knowing me to be a great walker,* in my own immediate vicinity—who have haunted the identical spot any time these twenty years! —He has not much respect for that class of feelings which goes by the name of sentimental. He applies the definition of real evil to bodily sufferings exclusively—and rejecteth all others as imaginary. He is affected by the sight, or the bare supposition, of a creature in pain, to a degree which I have never witnessed out of woman-

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the work of less renowned artists, 1 ff., the **Carracci, Giordano,** or **Maratti,** Italian painters of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

9–11. Cf. "Richard II," V, i, 78–80. **Hallowmas:** All Saints' Day, November 1. **shortest day:** December 22.

kind. A constitutional acuteness to this class of sufferings may in part account for this. The animal tribe in particular he taketh under his especial protection. A broken-winded or spur-galled horse is sure to find an advocate in him. An over-loaded ass is his client for ever. He is the apostle to the brute kind—the never-failing friend of those who have none to care for them. The contemplation of a lobster boiled, or eels skinned *alive*, will wring him so, that "all for pity he could die." It will take the savour from his palate, and the rest from his pillow, for days and nights. With the intense feeling of Thomas Clarkson, he wanted only the steadiness of pursuit, and unity of purpose, of that "true yoke-fellow with Time," to have effected as much for the *Animal*, as *he* hath done for the *Negro Creation*. But my uncontrollable cousin is but imperfectly formed for purposes which demand co-operation. He cannot wait. His amelioration-plans must be ripened in a day. For this reason he has cut but an equivocal figure in benevolent societies, and combinations for the alleviation of human sufferings. His zeal constantly makes him to outrun, and put out, his coadjutors. He thinks of relieving,—while they think of debating. He was black-balled out of a society for the Relief of * * * * * * * * * * because the fervour of his humanity

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9–10. **"all for pity he could die."** Spenser's "Faerie Queene," I, iii, 1.

12. **Thomas Clarkson** (1760–1846): famous abolitionist.

14. **"true yoke-fellow with Time"**: from Wordsworth's sonnet on Clarkson.

18. **His amelioration-plans,** etc.: his plans for bettering conditions must be put into instant effect.

19. **cut but an equivocal figure:** showed himself in questionable light.

toiled beyond the formal apprehension, and creeping processes, of his associates. I shall always consider this distinction as a patent of nobility in the Elia family!

Do I mention these seeming inconsistencies to smile at, or upbraid, my unique cousin? Marry, heaven, and all good manners, and the understanding that should be between kinsfolk, forbid!—With all the strangeness of this *strangest of the Elias*—I would not have him in one jot or tittle other than he is; neither would I barter or exchange my wild kinsman for the most exact, regular, and every-way consistent kinsman breathing.

In my next, reader, I may perhaps give you some account of my cousin Bridget—if you are not already surfeited with cousins—and take you by the hand, if you are willing to go with us, on an excursion which we made a summer or two since, in search of *more cousins*—

Through the green plains of pleasant Hertfordshire.

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8–9. **one jot or tittle**: in no smallest detail. Cf. Matthew, v, 18.
17. Quoted from an early sonnet of Lamb's.

## VIII. MACKERY END, IN HERTFORDSHIRE

Bridget Elia has been my housekeeper for many a long year. I have obligations to Bridget, extending beyond the period of memory. We house together, old bachelor and maid, in a sort of double singleness; with such tolerable comfort, upon the whole, that I, for one, find myself in no sort of disposition to go out upon the mountains, with the rash king's offspring, to bewail my celibacy. We agree pretty well in our tastes and habits —yet so, as "with a difference." We are generally in harmony, with occasional bickerings—as it should be among near relations. Our sympathies are rather understood, than expressed; and once, upon my dissembling a tone in my voice more kind than ordinary, my cousin burst into tears, and complained that I was altered. We are both great readers in different directions. While I am hanging over (for the thousandth time) some passage in old Burton, or one of his strange contemporaries, she is abstracted in some modern tale, or adventure, whereof our common reading-table is daily fed with assiduously fresh supplies. Narrative teases

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7–8. **with the rash king's offspring, to bewail my celibacy.** For the account of Jephthah's daughter see Judges, xi, 30–40. Cf. also Tennyson's "Dream of Fair Women."

9. **difference:** heraldic blazons used to distinguish persons having the same coat of arms.

9–15. One of the best illustrations of the peculiar bent of Lamb's humor—a combination of the quaint with the unexpected.

me. I have little concern in the progress of events. She must have a story,—well, ill, or indifferently told—so there be life stirring in it, and plenty of good or evil accidents. The fluctuations of fortune in fiction—and almost in real life—have ceased to interest, or operate but dully upon me. Out-of-the-way humours and opinions—heads with some diverting twist in them—the oddities of authorship please me most. My cousin has a native disrelish of anything that sounds odd or bizarre. Nothing goes down with her that is quaint, irregular, or out of the road of common sympathy. She "holds Nature more clever." I can pardon her blindness to the beautiful obliquities of the Religio Medici; but she must apologize to me for certain disrespectful insinuations, which she has been pleased to throw out latterly, touching the intellectuals of a dear favourite of mine, of the last century but one—the thrice noble, chaste, and virtuous,—but again somewhat fantastical, and original-brained, generous Margaret Newcastle.

It has been the lot of my cousin, oftener perhaps than I could have wished, to have had for her associates and mine, free-thinkers—leaders, and disciples, of novel philosophies and systems; but she neither wrangles with, nor accepts, their opinions. That which was good and venerable to her, when she was a child, retains its authority over her mind still. She never juggles or plays tricks with her understanding.

We are both of us inclined to be a little too positive; and I have observed the result of our disputes to be al-

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7. **diverting twist**: pleasing oddity in their way of looking at things.

10. **bizarre**: grotesque; odd.

13. **Religio Medici.** See note on page 253.

19. **Margaret Newcastle.** See note on page 254.

most uniformly this—that in matters of fact, dates, and circumstances, it turns out, that I was in the right, and my cousin in the wrong. But where we have differed upon moral points; upon something proper to be done, or let alone; whatever heat of opposition, or steadiness of conviction, I set out with, I am sure always in the long run, to be brought over to her way of thinking.

I must touch upon the foibles of my kinswoman with a gentle hand, for Bridget does not like to be told of her faults. She hath an awkward trick (to say no worse of it) of reading in company: at which times she will answer *yes* or *no* to a question, without fully understanding its purport—which is provoking, and derogatory in the highest degree to the dignity of the putter of the said question. Her presence of mind is equal to the most pressing trials of life, but will sometimes desert her upon trifling occasions. When the purpose requires it, and is a thing of moment, she can speak to it greatly; but in matters which are not stuff of the conscience, she hath been known sometimes to let slip a word less seasonably.

Her education in youth was not much attended to; and she happily missed all that train of female garniture, which passeth by the name of accomplishments. She was tumbled early, by accident or design, into a spacious closet of good old English reading, without much selection or prohibition, and browsed at will upon that fair and wholesome pasturage. Had I twenty girls, they should be brought up exactly in this fashion. I know not whether their chance in wedlock might not be

19. **greatly**: in a large way; comprehensively.

23–24. **garniture.** Lamb means music, painting, etc.

26. **spacious closet of good old English reading**: the library of Samuel Salt. See note on page 267.

diminished by it; but I can answer for it, that it makes (if the worst come to the worst) most incomparable old maids.

In a season of distress, she is the truest comforter; but in the teasing accidents, and minor perplexities, which do not call out the *will* to meet them, she sometimes maketh matters worse by an excess of participation. If she does not always divide your trouble, upon the pleasanter occasions of life she is sure always to treble your satisfaction. She is excellent to be at play with, or upon a visit; but best, when she goes a journey with you.

We made an excursion together a few summers since, into Hertfordshire, to beat up the quarters of some of our less-known relations in that fine corn country.

The oldest thing I remember is Mackery End; or Mackarel End, as it is spelt, perhaps more properly, in some old maps of Hertfordshire; a farm-house,—delightfully situated within a gentle walk from Wheathampstead. I can just remember having been there, on a visit to a great-aunt, when I was a child, under the care of Bridget; who, as I have said, is older than myself by some ten years. I wish that I could throw into a heap the remainder of our joint existences, that we might share them in equal division. But that is impossible. The house was at that time in the occupation of a substantial yeoman, who had married my grandmother's sister. His name was Gladman. My grandmother was a Bruton, married to a Field. The Gladmans and the Brutons are still flourishing in that part of the country, but the Fields are almost extinct. More than forty years had elapsed since the visit I speak of; and,

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14. **beat up the quarters:** make a sudden attack upon the house.

for the greater portion of that period, we had lost sight of the other two branches also. Who or what sort of persons inherited Mackery End—kindred or strange folk—we were afraid almost to conjecture, but determined some day to explore.

By somewhat a circuitous route, taking the noble park at Luton in our way from Saint Alban's, we arrived at the spot of our anxious curiosity about noon. The sight of the old farm-house, though every trace of it was effaced from my recollection, affected me with a pleasure which I had not experienced for many a year. For though *I* had forgotten it, *we* had never forgotten being there together, and we had been talking about Mackery End all our lives, till memory on my part became mocked with a phantom of itself, and I thought I knew the aspect of a place, which, when present, O how unlike it was to *that*, which I had conjured up so many times instead of it!

Still the air breathed balmily about it; the season was in the "heart of June," and I could say with the poet,

> But thou, that didst appear so fair
> To fond imagination,
> Dost rival in the light of day
> Her delicate creation![1]

Bridget's was more a waking bliss than mine, for she easily remembered her old acquaintance again—some altered features, of course, a little grudged at. At first, indeed, she was ready to disbelieve for joy; but the

[1] Wordsworth.

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14–15. till memory . . . became mocked with a phantom of itself: the memory had been so long with him that it had become hazy; but he still took it for reality.

21–24. "Yarrow Revisited."

scene soon reconfirmed itself in her affections—and she traversed every outpost of the old mansion, to the wood-house, the orchard, the place where the pigeon-house had stood (house and birds were alike flown)—with a breathless impatience of recognition, which was more pardonable perhaps than decorous at the age of fifty odd. But Bridget in some things is behind her years.

The only thing left was to get into the house—and that was a difficulty which to me singly would have been insurmountable; for I am terribly shy in making myself known to strangers and out-of-date kinsfolk. Love, stronger than scruple, winged my cousin in without me; but she soon returned with a creature that might have sat to a sculptor for the image of Welcome. It was the youngest of the Gladmans; who, by marriage with a Bruton, had become mistress of the old mansion. A comely brood are the Brutons. Six of them, females, were noted as the handsomest young women in the county. But this adopted Bruton, in my mind, was better than they all—more comely. She was born too late to have remembered me. She just recollected in early life to have had her cousin Bridget once pointed out to her, climbing a stile. But the name of kindred, and of cousinship, was enough. Those slender ties, that prove slight as gossamer in the rending atmosphere of a metropolis, bind faster, as we found it, in hearty, homely, loving Hertfordshire. In five minutes we were as thoroughly acquainted as if we had been born and bred up together; were familiar, even to the calling each other by our Christian names. So Christians should call one another. To have seen Bridget, and her

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25–26. **rending atmosphere of a metropolis:** the separating social relations of a city.

—it was like the meeting of the two scriptural cousins! There was a grace and dignity, an amplitude of form and stature, answering to her mind in this farmer's wife, which would have shined in a palace—or so we thought it. We were made welcome by husband and wife equally—we, and our friend that was with us.—I had almost forgotten him—but B. F. will not so soon forget that meeting, if peradventure he shall read this on the far-distant shores where the Kangaroo haunts. The fatted calf was made ready, or rather was already so, as if in anticipation of our coming; and, after an appropriate glass of native wine, never let me forget with what honest pride this hospitable cousin made us proceed to Wheathampstead, to introduce us (as some new-found rarity) to her mother and sister Gladmans, who did indeed know something more of us, at a time when she almost knew nothing.—With what correspond ing kindness we were received by them also—how Brid get's memory, exalted by the occasion, warmed into a thousand half-obliterated recollections of things and persons, to my utter astonishment, and her own—and to the astoundment of B. F. who sat by, almost the only thing that was not a cousin there,—old effaced images of more than half-forgotten names and circumstances still crowding back upon her, as words written in lemon come out upon exposure to a friendly warmth,—when I

1. **two scriptural cousins:** Mary, the mother of Christ, and Elizabeth, the mother of John the Baptist. Cf. Luke, i, 39–56.

7. **B. F.:** Barron Field. See essay on "Distant Correspondents," and note to same.

9. **where the Kangaroo haunts:** Australia. Field lived at Sid ney, N. S. W.

10. **fatted calf:** a feast. Cf. Luke, xv.

25. **words written in lemon:** an invisible ink that becomes legible when exposed to heat.

forget all this, then may my country cousins forget me; and Bridget no more remember, that in the days of weakling infancy I was her tender charge—as I have been her care in foolish manhood since—in those pretty pastoral walks, long ago, about Mackery End, in Hertfordshire.

## IX. IMPERFECT SYMPATHIES

I am of a constitution so general, that it consorts and sympathizeth with all things; I have no antipathy, or rather idiosyncrasy, in anything. Those national repugnances do not touch me, nor do I behold with prejudice the French, Italian, Spaniard, or Dutch.—*Religio Medici.*

THAT the author of the Religio Medici, mounted upon the airy stilts of abstraction, conversant about notional and conjectural essences; in whose categories of Being the possible took the upper hand of the actual; should have overlooked the impertinent individualities of such poor concretions as mankind, is not much to be admired. It is rather to be wondered at, that in the genus of animals he should have condescended to distinguish that species at all. For myself—earth-bound and fettered to the scene of my activities,—

Standing on earth, not rapt above the sky,

I confess that I do feel the differences of mankind, national or individual, to an unhealthy excess. I can look with no indifferent eye upon things or persons. What-

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6–11. Freely paraphrased, this sentence would read: That Sir Thomas Browne, dwelling in the realms of philosophy, thinking about ideal and uncertain states of existence; in whose classifications of Life the thing that *might be* seemed more important than the thing that *was;* that he should have overlooked the unimportant differences in the individualities of mere man, is not much to be wondered at. **Admired** is here used in its original sense. Cf. the Latin.)

16. Slightly misquoted from "Paradise Lost," VII, 23.

ever is, is to me a matter of taste or distaste; or when once it becomes indifferent, it begins to be disrelishing. I am, in plainer words, a bundle of prejudices—made up of likings and dislikings—the veriest thrall to sympathies, apathies, antipathies. In a certain sense, I hope it may be said of me that I am a lover of my species. I can feel for all indifferently, but I cannot feel towards all equally. The more purely-English word that expresses sympathy will better explain my meaning. I can be a friend to a worthy man, who upon another account cannot be my mate or *fellow*. I cannot *like* all people alike.[1]

[1] I would be understood as confining myself to the subject of *imperfect sympathies*. To nations or classes of men there can be no direct *antipathy*. There may be individuals born and constellated so opposite to another individual nature, that the same sphere cannot hold them. I have met with my moral antipodes, and can believe the story of two persons meeting (who never saw one another before in their lives) and instantly fighting.

——We by proof find there should be
'Twixt man and man such an antipathy,
That though he can show no just reason why
For any former wrong or injury,
Can neither find a blemish in his fame,
Nor aught in face or feature justly blame,
Can challenge or accuse him of no evil,
Yet notwithstanding hates him as a devil.

The lines are from old Heywood's "Hierarchie of Angels," and he subjoins a curious story in confirmation, of a Spaniard who attempted to assassinate a King Ferdinand of Spain, and being put to the rack could give no other reason for the deed but an inveterate antipathy which he had taken to the first sight of the King.

——The cause to which that act compell'd him
Was, he ne'er loved him since he first beheld him.

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4. **the veriest thrall,** etc.: Lamb is an abject slave to his sympathies, his feelings of indifference, and his active dislikes.

14–15. **constellated:** fated by the stars.

16. **antipodes:** opposite.

27. **old Heywood:** Thomas Heywood, English dramatist of the seventeenth century.

I have been trying all my life to like Scotchmen, and am obliged to desist from the experiment in despair. They cannot like me—and in truth, I never knew one of that nation who attempted to do it. There is something more plain and ingenuous in their mode of proceeding. We know one another at first sight. There is an order of imperfect intellects (under which mine must be content to rank) which in its constitution is essentially anti-Caledonian. The owners of the sort of faculties I allude to, have minds rather suggestive than comprehensive. They have no pretences to much clearness or precision in their ideas, or in their manner of expressing them. Their intellectual wardrobe (to confess fairly) has few whole pieces in it. They are content with fragments and scattered pieces of Truth. She presents no full front to them—a feature or side-face at the most. Hints and glimpses, germs and crude essays at a system, is the utmost they pretend to. They beat up a little game peradventure—and leave it to knottier heads, more robust constitutions, to run it down. The light that lights them is not steady and polar, but mutable and shifting: waxing, and again waning. Their conversation is accordingly. They will throw out a random word in or out of season, and be content to let it pass for what it is worth. They cannot speak always as if they were upon their oath—but must be understood, speak-

8–9. **anti-Caledonian:** Caledonia, the old Roman name for Scotland; therefore, opposed to the Scots.

11 ff. Lamb here pretends to give a faithful picture of his own mind. Is he truthful in the revelation?

17. **essays:** attempts.

18. **beat up a little game.** Cf. a similar phrase on page 84, line 14. The former is a military, this a sporting phrase, the meaning here being to rouse up the game for a shot.

21. **polar:** that is, like the unchanging light of the North Star.

ing or writing, with some abatement. They seldom wait to mature a proposition, but e'en bring it to market in the green ear. They delight to impart their defective discoveries, as they arise, without waiting for their full development. They are no systematizers, and would but err more by attempting it. Their minds, as I said before, are suggestive merely. The brain of a true Caledonian (if I am not mistaken) is constituted upon quite a different plan. His Minerva is born in panoply. You are never admitted to see his ideas in their growth—if, indeed, they do grow, and are not rather put together upon principles of clock-work. You never catch his mind in an undress. He never hints or suggests anything, but unlades his stock of ideas in perfect order and completeness. He brings his total wealth into company, and gravely unpacks it. His riches are always about him. He never stoops to catch a glittering something in your presence, to share it with you, before he quite knows whether it be true touch or not. You cannot cry *halves* to anything that he finds. He does not find, but bring. You never witness his first apprehension of a thing. His understanding is always at its meridian—you never see the first dawn, the early streaks.—He has no falterings of self-suspicion. Surmises, guesses, misgivings, half-intuitions, semi-con-

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2–3. **bring it to market in the green ear:** submit their ideas before they are mature, like corn brought to market in the green ear.

7–8. **The brain of a true Caledonian,** etc. Having characterized his own mind, Lamb now begins to describe the type of mind which he conceives to be the exact opposite of his—that of the Scotchman—and to point out the basic differences which make agreement between the two impossible.

17–18. **glittering something:** a brilliant inspiration.

19. **true touch:** genuine.

20. **cry halves:** claim your share (in the discussion).

sciousness, partial illuminations, dim instincts, embryo conceptions, have no place in his brain, or vocabulary. The twilight of dubiety never falls upon him. Is he orthodox—he has no doubts. Is he an infidel—he has none either. Between the affirmative and the negative there is no border-land with him. You cannot hover with him upon the confines of truth, or wander in the maze of a probable argument. He always keeps the path. You cannot make excursions with him—for he sets you right. His taste never fluctuates. His morality never abates. He cannot compromise, or understand middle actions. There can be but a right and a wrong. His conversation is as a book. His affirmations have the sanctity of an oath. You must speak upon the square with him. He stops a metaphor like a suspected person in an enemy's country. "A healthy book!"—said one of his countrymen to me, who had ventured to give that appellation to John Buncle,—"did I catch rightly what you said? I have heard of a man in health, and of a healthy state of body, but I do not see how that epithet can be properly applied to a book." Above all, you must beware of indirect expressions before a Caledonian. Clap an extinguisher upon your irony, if you are unhappily blest with a vein of it. Remember you are upon your oath. I have a print of a graceful female after

3. **The twilight of dubiety never falls upon him:** no shadow of a doubt ever crosses his mind.

7. **the confines of truth:** the dividing line between truth and falsehood.

15. **He stops a metaphor:** he cannot tolerate a figure of speech, but must speak literally.

18. **John Buncle.** See note, page 254.

23. **Clap an extinguisher upon:** instantly suppress. An extinguisher is a hollow cone used to set over the flame of a candle to extinguish it.

Leonardo da Vinci, which I was showing off to Mr. ——. After he had examined it minutely, I ventured to ask him how he liked MY BEAUTY (a foolish name it goes by among my friends)—when he very gravely assured me, that "he had considerable respect for my character and talents" (so he was pleased to say), "but had not given himself much thought about the degree of my personal pretensions." The misconception staggered me, but did not seem much to disconcert him.—Persons of this nation are particularly fond of affirming a truth —which nobody doubts. They do not so properly affirm, as annunciate it. They do indeed appear to have such a love of truth (as if, like virtue, it were valuable for itself) that all truth becomes equally valuable, whether the proposition that contains it be new or old, disputed, or such as is impossible to become a subject of disputation. I was present not long since at a party of North Britons, where a son of Burns was expected; and happened to drop a silly expression (in my South British way), that I wished it were the father instead of the son—when four of them started up at once to inform me, that "that was impossible, because he was dead." An impracticable wish, it seems, was more than they could conceive. Swift has hit off this part of their character, namely, their love of truth, in his biting way, but with an illiberality that necessarily confines the passage to the margin.[1] The tediousness of these people is cer-

[1] There are some people who think they sufficiently acquit themselves, and entertain their company, with relating facts of no consequence, not at all out of the road of such common incidents as happen every day; and this I have observed more frequently among the Scots than any other nation, who are very careful not to omit the minutest circumstances of time or place; which kind of discourse, if it were not a little relieved by the uncouth terms and phrases, as well as accent and gesture peculiar to that

tainly provoking. I wonder if they ever tire of one another!—In my early life I had a passionate fondness for the poetry of Burns. I have sometimes foolishly hoped to ingratiate myself with his countrymen by expressing it. But I have always found that a true Scot resents your admiration of his compatriot, even more than he would your contempt of him. The latter he imputes to your "imperfect acquaintance with many of the words which he uses;" and the same objection makes it a presumption in you to suppose that you can admire him.—Thomson they seem to have forgotten. Smollett they have neither forgotten nor forgiven for his delineation of Rory and his companion, upon their first introduction to our metropolis.—Speak of Smollett as a great genius, and they will retort upon you Hume's History compared with *his* Continuation of it. What if the historian had continued Humphrey Clinker?

I have, in the abstract, no disrespect for Jews. They are a piece of stubborn antiquity, compared with which Stonehenge is in its nonage. They date beyond the pyramids. But I should not care to be in habits of familiar intercourse with any of that nation. I confess that I have not the nerves to enter their synagogues. Old prejudices cling about me. I cannot shake off the story of Hugh of Lincoln. Centuries of injury, contempt, and hate, on the one side,—of cloaked revenge,

country, would be hardly tolerable.—*Hints towards an Essay on Conversation.*

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13. **Rory and his companion.** In Smollett's novel, "Roderick Random," Rory and his companion, Strap, are made to appear like country greenhorns on their arrival in London.

20. **nonage**: not of age; the period of legal infancy.

20–21. **date beyond the pyramids.** The oldest of the pyramids (Cheops) is said to have been begun about 1500 B.C.

dissimulation, and hate, on the other, between our and their fathers, must, and ought, to affect the blood of the children. I cannot believe it can run clear and kindly yet; or that a few fine words, such as candour, liberality, the light of a nineteenth century, can close up the breaches of so deadly a disunion. A Hebrew is nowhere congenial to me. He is least distasteful on 'Change—for the mercantile spirit levels all distinctions, as are all beauties in the dark. I boldly confess that I do not relish the approximation of Jew and Christian, which has become so fashionable. The reciprocal endearments have, to me, something hypocritical and unnatural in them. I do not like to see the Church and Synagogue kissing and congeeing in awkward postures of an affected civility. If *they* are converted, why do they not come over to us altogether? Why keep up a form of separation, when the life of it is fled? If they can sit with us at table, why do they keck at our cookery? I do not understand these half convertites. Jews christianizing—Christians judaizing—puzzle me. I like fish or flesh. A moderate Jew is a more confounding piece of anomaly than a wet Quaker. The spirit of the synagogue is essentially *separative*. B—— would have been more in keeping if he had abided by the faith of his forefathers. There is a fine scorn in his face, which nature meant to be of——Christians. The Hebrew spirit is strong in him, in spite of his proselytism. He cannot conquer the Shibboleth. How it breaks out, when he sings, "The

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7. **on 'Change:** at the Exchange.
10. **the approximation:** the bringing together of.
14. **congeeing:** bowing; saluting in friendly fashion.
18. **keck:** to show disgust; literally, to exhibit nausea.
22. **a wet Quaker:** drunken Quaker.
27. **proselytism:** being converted.

Children of Israel passed through the Red Sea!'' The auditors, for the moment, are as Egyptians to him, and he rides over our necks in triumph. There is no mistaking him. B—— has a strong expression of sense in his countenance, and it is confirmed by his singing. The foundation of his vocal excellence is sense. He sings with understanding, as Kemble delivered dialogue. He would sing the Commandments, and give an appropriate character to each prohibition. His nation, in general, have not over-sensible countenances. How should they? —but you seldom see a silly expression among them. Gain, and the pursuit of gain, sharpen a man's visage. I never heard of an idiot being born among them.— Some admire the Jewish female-physiognomy. I admire it—but with trembling. Jael had those full dark inscrutable eyes.

In the Negro countenance you will often meet with strong traits of benignity. I have felt yearnings of tenderness towards some of these faces—or rather masks—that have looked out kindly upon one in casual encounters in the streets and highways. I love what Fuller beautifully calls—these '' images of God cut in ebony.'' But I should not like to associate with them, to share my meals and my good-nights with them—because they are black.

I love Quaker ways, and Quaker worship. I venerate the Quaker principles. It does me good for the rest of the day when I meet any of their people in my path. When I am ruffled or disturbed by any occurrence, the sight, or quiet voice of a Quaker, acts upon me as a ventilator, lightening the air, and taking off a load from the

1. **"The Children of Israel passed through the Red Sea":** from Handel's Oratorio, "Israel in Egypt."

7. **Kemble,** John (1757–1823), the famous actor.

bosom. But I cannot like the Quakers (as Desdemona would say) "to live with them." I am all over sophisticated—with humours, fancies, craving hourly sympathy. I must have books, pictures, theatres, chit-chat, scandal, jokes, ambiguities, and a thousand whimwhams, which their simpler taste can do without. I should starve at their primitive banquet. My appetites are too high for the salads which (according to Evelyn) Eve dressed for the angel, my gusto too excited

To sit a guest with Daniel at his pulse.

The indirect answers which Quakers are often found to return to a question put to them may be explained, I think, without the vulgar assumption, that they are more given to evasion and equivocating than other people. They naturally look to their words more carefully, and are more cautious of committing themselves. They have a peculiar character to keep up on this head. They stand in a manner upon their veracity. A Quaker is by law exempted from taking an oath. The custom of resorting to an oath in extreme cases, sanctified as it is by all religious antiquity, is apt (it must be confessed) to introduce into the laxer sort of minds the notion of two kinds of truth—the one applicable to the solemn affairs of justice, and the other to the common proceedings of daily intercourse. As truth bound upon the conscience by an oath can be but truth, so in the common affirmations of the shop and the market-place a latitude is expected, and conceded upon questions

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1–2. **as Desdemona would say.** Cf. "Othello," I, iii, 249–251. The Italian Desdemona married the Moor, Othello.

8–9. **salads which Eve dressed for the angel.** Cf. "Paradise Lost," V, 315–450.

10. Cf. "Paradise Regained," II, 278.

wanting this solemn covenant. Something less than truth satisfies. It is common to hear a person say, "You do not expect me to speak as if I were upon my oath." Hence a great deal of incorrectness and inadvertency, short of falsehood, creeps into ordinary conversation; and a kind of secondary or laic-truth is tolerated, where clergy-truth—oath-truth, by the nature of the circumstances, is not required. A Quaker knows none of this distinction. His simple affirmation being received, upon the most sacred occasions, without any further test, stamps a value upon the words which he is to use upon the most indifferent topics of life. He looks to them, naturally, with more severity. You can have of him no more than his word. He knows, if he is caught tripping in a casual expression, he forfeits, for himself, at least, his claim to the invidious exemption He knows that his syllables are weighed—and how far a consciousness of this particular watchfulness, exerted against a person, has a tendency to produce indirect answers, and a diverting of the question by honest means, might be illustrated, and the practice justified, by a more sacred example than is proper to be adduced upon this occasion. The admirable presence of mind, which is notorious in Quakers upon all contingencies, might be traced to this imposed self-watchfulness—if it did not seem rather an humble and secular scion of that old stock of religious constancy, which never bent or faltered, in the Primitive Friends, or gave way to the winds of persecution, to the violence of judge or accuser, under trials and racking examinations. "You will never be the

21–22. **by a more sacred example.** Lamb is referring to the equivocal answers Christ made his enemies. Cf. Luke, xi, 53–54; Mark, xii, 13–34; Matthew, xxii, 15–46.

26. **secular scion:** worldly descendant.

wiser, if I sit here answering your questions till midnight,'' said one of those upright Justicers to Penn, who had been putting law-cases with a puzzling subtlety. ''Thereafter as the answers may be,'' retorted the Quaker. The astonishing composure of this people is sometimes ludicrously displayed in lighter instances.—I was travelling in a stage-coach with three male Quakers, buttoned up in the straightest non-conformity of their sect. We stopped to bait at Andover, where a meal, partly tea apparatus, partly supper, was set before us. My friends confined themselves to the tea-table. I in my way took supper. When the landlady brought in the bill, the eldest of my companions discovered that she had charged for both meals. This was resisted. Mine hostess was very clamorous and positive. Some mild arguments were used on the part of the Quakers, for which the heated mind of the good lady seemed by no means a fit recipient. The guard came in with his usual peremptory notice. The Quakers pulled out their money, and formally tendered it—so much for tea—I, in humble imitation, tendering mine—for the supper which I had taken. She would not relax in her demand. So they all three quietly put up their silver, as did myself, and marched out of the room, the eldest and gravest going first, with myself closing up the rear, who thought I could not do better than follow the example of such grave and warrantable personages. We got in. The steps went up. The coach drove off. The mur-

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4. **"Thereafter as the answers may be."** Penn's retort intimates, of course, that when they begin to answer him straightforwardly he will have no trouble in understanding.

9. **to bait:** to take refreshment.

18–19. **his usual peremptory notice:** that the coach was about to start.

murs of mine hostess, not very indistinctly or ambiguously pronounced, became after a time inaudible—and now my conscience, which the whimsical scene had for a while suspended, beginning to give some twitches, I waited, in the hope that some justification would be offered by these serious persons for the seeming injustice of their conduct. To my great surprise, not a syllable was dropped on the subject. They sate as mute as at a meeting. At length the eldest of them broke silence, by inquiring of his next neighbour, " Hast thee heard how indigos go at the India House? " and the question operated as a soporific on my moral feeling as far as Exeter.

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11–12. **operated as a soporific on my moral feeling:** put my conscience to sleep.

## X. THE OLD BENCHERS OF THE INNER TEMPLE

I WAS born, and passed the first seven years of my life, in the Temple. Its church, its halls, its gardens, its fountain, its river, I had almost said—for in those young years, what was this king of rivers to me but a stream that watered our pleasant places? these are of my oldest recollections. I repeat, to this day, no verses to myself more frequently, or with kindlier emotion, than those of Spenser, where he speaks of this spot.

> There when they came, whereas those bricky towers,
> The which on Themmes brode aged back doth ride,
> Where now the studious lawyers have their bowers,
> There whylome wont the Templar knights to bide,
> Till they decayed through pride.

Indeed, it is the most elegant spot in the metropolis. What a transition for a countryman visiting London for the first time—the passing from the crowded Strand or Fleet Street, by unexpected avenues, into its magnificent ample squares, its classic green recesses! What a cheerful, liberal look hath that portion of it, which, from

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4. **king of rivers:** the Thames.

9–13. Spenser's "Prothalamion," VIII.

12. There formerly the Knights Templar were accustomed to abide. See note on "The Temple"; also Introduction, pages xliii–ff.

three sides, overlooks the greater garden: that goodly pile

Of building strong, albeit of Paper hight,

confronting, with massy contrast, the lighter, older, more fantastically shrouded one, named of Harcourt, with the cheerful Crown-office Row (place of my kindly engendure), right opposite the stately stream, which washes the garden-foot with her yet scarcely trade-polluted waters, and seems but just weaned from her Twickenham Naiades! a man would give something to have been born in such places. What a collegiate aspect has that fine Elizabethan hall, where the fountain plays, which I have made to rise and fall, how many times! to the astoundment of the young urchins, my contemporaries, who, not being able to guess at its recondite machinery, were almost tempted to hail the wondrous work as magic! What an antique air had the now almost effaced sun-dials, with their moral inscriptions, seeming coevals with that Time which they measured, and to take their revelations of its flight immediately from heaven, holding correspondence with the fountain of light! How would the dark line steal imperceptibly

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3. **of Paper hight:** called the Paper Buildings. These are opposite King's Bench Walk. **Hight** is from the Old English *highten*, to be called.

5. **named of Harcourt:** the building named after Simon Harcourt, Lord Chancellor.

6–7. **kindly engendure:** natural birth; an archaic meaning of kindly. Lamb was born in Crown Office Row.

12. **fine Elizabethan hall:** the Inner Temple (in the architecture of the time of Queen Elizabeth).

15–16. **recondite:** hidden.

22. **dark line:** the shadow of the marker on the face of the dial, which marks the hours.

on, watched by the eye of childhood, eager to detect its movement, never catched, nice as an evanescent cloud, or the first arrests of sleep!

> Ah! yet doth beauty like a dial-hand
> Steal from his figure, and no pace perceived!

What a dead thing is a clock, with its ponderous embowelments of lead and brass, its pert or solemn dulness of communication, compared with the simple altar-like structure, and silent heart-language of the old dial! It stood as the garden god of Christian gardens. Why is it almost everywhere vanished? If its business-use be superseded by more elaborate inventions, its moral uses, its beauty, might have pleaded for its continuance. It spoke of moderate labours, of pleasures not protracted after sunset, of temperance, and good hours. It was the primitive clock, the horologe of the first world. Adam could scarce have missed it in Paradise. It was the measure appropriate for sweet plants and flowers to spring by, for the birds to apportion their silver warblings by, for flocks to pasture and be led to fold by. The shepherd "carved it out quaintly in the sun;" and, turning philosopher by the very occupation, provided it with mottos more touching than tombstones. It was a pretty device of the gardener, recorded by Marvell, who, in the days of artificial gardening, made a dial out of herbs and flowers. I must quote his verses a little higher up, for they are full, as all his serious poetry was, of a witty delicacy. They will not come in

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4. Shakespeare's "Sonnet CIV."

16. **horologe:** literally, hour-teller; time-piece.

17. **missed it:** done without it.

21. **"carved it out quaintly in the sun."** Cf. "III Henry VI," II, v, 24.

awkwardly, I hope, in a talk of fountains and sun-dials. He is speaking of sweet garden scenes:

What wonderous life is this I lead!
Ripe apples drop about my head.
The luscious clusters of the vine
Upon my mouth do crush their wine.
The nectarine, and curious peach,
Into my hands themselves do reach.
Stumbling on melons, as I pass,
Insnared with flowers, I fall on grass.
Meanwhile the mind from pleasure less
Withdraws into its happiness;
The mind, that ocean, where each kind
Does straight its own resemblance find;
Yet it creates, transcending these,
Far other worlds and other seas;
Annihilating all that's made
To a green thought in a green shade.
Here at the fountain's sliding foot,
Or at some fruit-tree's mossy root,
Casting the body's vest aside,
My soul into the boughs does glide:
There, like a bird, it sits and sings,
Then whets and claps its silver wings;
And, till prepared for longer flight,
Waves in its plumes the various light.
How well the skilful gardener drew,
Of flowers and herbs, this dial new!

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3. For the entire poem from which this quotation is made, see Palgrave's "Golden Treasury" (First Series), CXI.

13–14. **"where each kind does straight its own resemblance find."** According to an old belief the ocean was supposed to contain a counterpart of every kind of plant and animal life on the earth.

21. **body's vest.** The body is spoken of as the clothing of the spirit, which, for greater freedom, it casts aside.

Where, from above, the milder sun
Does through a fragrant zodiac run:
And, as it works, the industrious bee
Computes its time as well as we.
How could such sweet and wholesome hours
Be reckon'd, but with herbs and flowers? [1]

The artificial fountains of the metropolis are, in like manner, fast vanishing. Most of them are dried up, or bricked over. Yet, where one is left, as in that little green nook behind the South-Sea House, what a freshness it gives to the dreary pile! Four little winged marble boys used to play their virgin fancies, spouting out ever fresh streams from their innocent-wanton lips, in the square of Lincoln's Inn, when I was no bigger than they were figured. They are gone, and the spring choked up. The fashion, they tell me, is gone by, and these things are esteemed childish. Why not then gratify children, by letting them stand? Lawyers, I suppose, were children once. They are awakening images to them at least. Why must everything smack of man, and mannish? Is the world all grown up? Is childhood dead? Or is there not in the bosoms of the wisest and the best some of the child's heart left, to respond to its earliest enchantments? The figures were grotesque. Are the stiff-wigged living figures, that still flitter and chatter about that area, less Gothic in appearance? or is the splutter of their hot rhetoric one half so refreshing and innocent as the little cool playful streams those exploded cherubs uttered?

[1] From a copy of verses entitled *The Garden.*

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2. **zodiac**: the sun's circuit. For the purely astronomical meaning of the word see the dictionary.

26. **Gothic**: rude; barbaric.

They have lately gothicized the entrance to the Inner Temple-hall, and the library front, to assimilate them, I suppose, to the body of the hall, which they do not at all resemble. What is become of the winged horse that stood over the former? a stately arms! and who has removed those frescoes of the Virtues, which Italianized the end of the Paper-buildings?—my first hint of allegory! They must account to me for these things, which I miss so greatly.

The terrace is, indeed, left, which we used to call the parade; but the traces are passed away of the footsteps which made its pavement awful! It is become common and profane. The old benchers had it almost sacred to themselves, in the fore part of the day at least. They might not be sided or jostled. Their air and dress asserted the parade. You left wide spaces betwixt you, when you passed them. We walk on even terms with their successors. The roguish eye of J——ll, ever ready to be delivered of a jest, almost invites a stranger to vie a repartee with it. But what insolent familiar durst have mated Thomas Coventry?—whose person was a quadrate, his step massy and elephantine, his face square as the lion's, his gait peremptory and path-keeping, indivertible from his way as a moving column, the scarecrow of his inferiors, the brow-beater of equals and superiors, who made a solitude of children wherever he

5. **arms:** coat-of-arms. The arms of the Inner Temple are a winged horse rampant, blue, on a ground of gold.

12. **awful:** not in the modern slang sense, but in the original meaning, "full of awe," "awe-inspiring."

13. **profane:** vulgar; made common by the crowd.

18. **J——ll:** Jekyll, Master in Chancery; called to the Bench in 1805.

21. **mated:** matched himself against (in repartee).

22. **quadrate:** square.

came, for they fled his insufferable presence, as they would have shunned an Elisha bear. His growl was as thunder in their ears, whether he spake to them in mirth or in rebuke, his invitatory notes being, indeed, of all, the most repulsive and horrid. Clouds of snuff, aggravating the natural terrors of his speech, broke from each majestic nostril, darkening the air. He took it, not by pinches, but a palmful at once, diving for it under the mighty flaps of his old-fashioned waistcoat pocket; his waistcoat red and angry, his coat dark rappee, tinctured by dye original, and by adjuncts, with buttons of obsolete gold. And so he paced the terrace.

By his side a milder form was sometimes to be seen; the pensive gentility of Samuel Salt. They were coevals, and had nothing but that and their benchership in common. In politics Salt was a Whig, and Coventry a staunch Tory. Many a sarcastic growl did the latter cast out—for Coventry had a rough spinous humour—at the political confederates of his associate, which rebounded from the gentle bosom of the latter like cannonballs from wool. You could not ruffle Samuel Salt.

S. had the reputation of being a very clever man, and of excellent discernment in the chamber practice of the law. I suspect his knowledge did not amount to much. When a case of difficult disposition of money, testamentary or otherwise, came before him, he ordinarily

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2. **Elisha bear.** See II Kings, ii, 23–25.

4. **invitatory notes:** coaxing tones.

10–11. **rappee:** a coarse, dark snuff. Much of this in falling upon his coat had "tinctured it by dye original."

19. **spinous:** thorny.

24. **chamber practice:** the work of counsel at law, as contrasted with practice before the court.

handed it over with a few instructions to his man Lovel, who was a quick little fellow, and would despatch it out of hand by the light of natural understanding, of which he had an uncommon share. It was incredible what repute for talents S. enjoyed by the mere trick of gravity. He was a shy man; a child might pose him in a minute —indolent and procrastinating to the last degree. Yet men would give him credit for vast application in spite of himself. He was not to be trusted with himself with impunity. He never dressed for a dinner party but he forgot his sword—they wore swords then—or some other necessary part of his equipage. Lovel had his eye upon him on all these occasions, and ordinarily gave him his cue. If there was anything which he could speak unseasonably, he was sure to do it.—He was to dine at a relative's of the unfortunate Miss Blandy on the day of her execution; and L., who had a wary foresight of his probable hallucinations, before he set out, schooled him with great anxiety not in any possible manner to allude to her story that day. S. promised faithfully to observe the injunction. He had not been seated in the parlour, where the company was expecting the dinner summons, four minutes, when, a pause in the conversation ensuing, he got up, looked out of window, and pulling down his ruffles—an ordinary motion with him—observed, "it was a gloomy day," and added, "Miss Blandy must be hanged by this time, I suppose." Instances of this

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1. **Lovel:** John Lamb, the father of Charles. See note on page 267.

12. **equipage:** equipment.

13–14. **gave him his cue:** told him when and what to speak.

18. **hallucinations:** mistaken notions, probable blunders that Salt might make.

25. **his ruffles:** the lace cuffs then in vogue.

sort were perpetual. Yet S. was thought by some of the greatest men of his time a fit person to be consulted, not alone in matters pertaining to the law, but in the ordinary niceties and embarrassments of conduct—from force of manner entirely. He never laughed. He had the same good fortune among the female world,—was a known toast with the ladies, and one or two are said to have died for love of him—I suppose, because he never trifled or talked gallantry with them, or paid them, indeed, hardly common attentions. He had a fine face and person, but wanted, methought, the spirit that should have shown them off with advantage to the women. His eye lacked lustre.—Not so, thought Susan P——; who, at the advanced age of sixty, was seen, in the cold evening time, unaccompanied, wetting the pavement of B——d Row with tears that fell in drops which might be heard, because her friend had died that day—he, whom she had pursued with a hopeless passion for the last forty years—a passion which years could not extinguish or abate; nor the long resolved, yet gently enforced, puttings off of unrelenting bachelorhood dissuade from its cherished purpose. Mild Susan P——, thou hast now thy friend in heaven!

Thomas Coventry was a cadet of the noble family of that name. He passed his youth in contracted circumstances, which gave him early those parsimonious habits which in after-life never forsook him; so that, with one windfall or another, about the time I knew him he was

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6–7. **a known toast**: known as one whose health would be drunk by the ladies.

16. **B——d Row**: Bedford Row, Strand, where lawyers congregate.

21. **puttings off**: repulses.

24. **cadet**: younger son.

master of four or five hundred thousand pounds; nor did he look, or walk, worth a moidore less. He lived in a gloomy house opposite the pump in Serjeant's Inn, Fleet Street. J., the counsel, is doing self-imposed penance in it, for what reason I divine not, at this day. C. had an agreeable seat at North Cray, where he seldom spent above a day or two at a time in the summer; but preferred, during the hot months, standing at his window in this damp, close, well-like mansion, to watch, as he said, "the maids drawing water all day long." I suspect he had his within-door reasons for the preference. *Hic currus et arma fuêre.* He might think his treasures more safe. His house had the aspect of a strong box. C. was a close hunks—a hoarder rather than a miser—or, if a miser, none of the mad Elwes breed, who have brought discredit upon a character, which cannot exist without certain admirable points of steadiness and unity of purpose. One may hate a true miser, but cannot, I suspect, so easily despise him. By taking care of the pence, he is often enabled to part with the pounds, upon a scale that leaves us careless generous fellows halting at an immeasurable distance behind. C. gave away thirty thousand pounds at once in his lifetime to a blind charity. His housekeeping was severely looked after, but he kept the table of a gentleman. He would know who came in and who went out of his house, but his kitchen chimney was never suffered to freeze.

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2. **moidore:** an old Portuguese gold coin, worth $6.50.

4–5. **doing self-imposed penance in it:** voluntarily undergoing the inconvenience of living in it.

12. **Hic currus et arma fuêre:** here were his chariot and his arms. Cf. Virgil's "Æneid," I, 16.

14. **hunks:** a miserly fellow.

24. **blind charity:** an institution for the blind.

Salt was his opposite in this, as in all—never knew what he was worth in the world; and having but a competency for his rank, which his indolent habits were little calculated to improve, might have suffered severely if he had not had honest people about him. Lovel took care of everything. He was at once his clerk, his good servant, his dresser, his friend, his "flapper," his guide, stop-watch, auditor, treasurer. He did nothing without consulting Lovel, or failed in anything without expecting and fearing his admonishing. He put himself almost too much in his hands, had they not been the purest in the world. He resigned his title almost to respect as a master, if L. could ever have forgotten for a moment that he was a servant.

I knew this Lovel. He was a man of an incorrigible and losing honesty. A good fellow withal, and "would strike." In the cause of the oppressed he never considered inequalities, or calculated the number of his opponents. He once wrested a sword out of the hand of a man of quality that had drawn upon him; and pommelled him severely with the hilt of it. The swordsman had offered insult to a female—an occasion upon which no odds against him could have prevented the interference of Lovel. He would stand next day bare-headed to the same person, modestly to excuse his interference —for L. never forgot rank, where something better was not concerned. L. was the liveliest little fellow breathing, had a face as gay as Garrick's, whom he was said greatly to resemble (I have a portrait of him which confirms it), possessed a fine turn for humorous poetry—next to Swift and Prior—moulded heads in clay or plaster of Paris to admiration, by the dint of natural genius

16–17. **"would strike"**: act with decision.

31. **Prior,** Matthew (1664–1721): English poet.

merely; turned cribbage-boards, and such small cabinet toys, to perfection; took a hand at quadrille or bowls with equal facility; made punch better than any man of his degree in England; had the merriest quips and conceits, and was altogether as brimful of rogueries and inventions as you could desire. He was a brother of the angle, moreover, and just such a free, hearty, honest companion as Mr. Izaak Walton would have chosen to go a-fishing with. I saw him in his old age and the decay of his faculties, palsy-smitten, in the last sad stage of human weakness—"a remnant most forlorn of what he was,"—yet even then his eye would light up upon the mention of his favourite Garrick. He was greatest, he would say, in Bayes—"was upon the stage nearly throughout the whole performance, and as busy as a bee." At intervals, too, he would speak of his former life, and how he came up a little boy from Lincoln to go to service, and how his mother cried at parting with him, and how he returned, after some few years' absence, in his smart new livery to see her, and she blessed herself at the change, and could hardly be brought to believe that it was "her own bairn." And then, the excitement subsiding, he would weep, till I have wished that sad second-childhood might have a mother still to lay its head upon her lap. But the common mother of us all in no long time after received him gently into hers.

With Coventry, and with Salt, in their walks upon the

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6–7. **brother of the angle:** member of the brotherhood of fishermen.

8. **Izaak Walton.** See note on page 254.

11–12. **"a remnant most forlorn of what he was."** Cf. Lamb's lines, "Written on the Day of My Aunt's Funeral."

14. **Bayes:** the chief character in Geo. Villiers' play, "The Rehearsal," intended as a caricature of Dryden.

25–26. **common mother of us all:** the earth.

terrace, most commonly Peter Pierson would join, to make up a third. They did not walk linked arm in arm in those days—" as now our stout triumvirs sweep the streets,"—but generally with both hands folded behind them for state, or with one at least behind, the other carrying a cane. P. was a benevolent, but not a prepossessing man. He had that in his face which you could not term unhappiness; it rather implied an incapacity of being happy. His cheeks were colourless, even to whiteness. His look was uninviting, resembling (but without his sourness) that of our great philanthropist. I know that he *did* good acts, but I could never make out what he *was*. Contemporary with these, but subordinate, was Daines Barrington—another oddity—he walked burly and square—in imitation, I think, of Coventry—howbeit he attained not to the dignity of his prototype. Nevertheless, he did pretty well, upon the strength of being a tolerable antiquarian, and having a brother a bishop. When the account of his year's treasureship came to be audited, the following singular charge was unanimously disallowed by the bench: " Item, disbursed Mr. Allen, the gardener, twenty shillings, for stuff to poison the sparrows, by my orders." Next to him was old Barton—a jolly negation, who took upon him the ordering of the bills of fare for the parliament chamber, where the benchers dine—answering to the combination rooms at college—much to the easement of his less epicurean brethren. I know nothing more of

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1. **Peter Pierson:** called to the Bench, 1800; died 1808.

14. **Daines Barrington:** antiquary, naturalist, and friend of White of Selbourne; called to the Bench, 1777; died 1800.

24. **Barton,** Thomas: called to the Bench, 1775; died 1791. **jolly negation:** a jovial fellow of colorless character.

28. **epicurean:** indulgent of the appetite.

him.—Then Read, and Twopeny—Read, good-humoured and personable—Twopeny, good-humoured, but thin, and felicitous in jests upon his own figure. If T. was thin, Wharry was attenuated and fleeting. Many must remember him (for he was rather of later date) and his singular gait, which was performed by three steps and a jump regularly succeeding. The steps were little efforts, like that of a child beginning to walk; the jump comparatively vigorous, as a foot to an inch. Where he learned this figure, or what occasioned it, I could never discover. It was neither graceful in itself, nor seemed to answer the purpose any better than common walking. The extreme tenuity of his frame, I suspect, set him upon it. It was a trial of poising. Twopeny would often rally him upon his leanness, and hail him as Brother Lusty; but W. had no relish of a joke. His features were spiteful. I have heard that he would pinch his cat's ears extremely, when anything had offended him. Jackson—the omniscient Jackson he was called—was of this period. He had the reputation of possessing more multifarious knowledge than any man of his time. He was the Friar Bacon of the less literate portion of the Temple. I remember a pleasant passage, of the cook applying to him, with much formality of apology, for instructions how to write down *edge* bone of beef in his bill of commons. He was supposed to

1. **Read,** John: called to the Bench, 1792; died 1804. **Twopeny,** Richard: a stockbroker who lived in the Temple. Ainger says he never was one of the Benchers. He died in 1809.

2. **personable:** of good personal appearance.

4. **Wharry,** John: called to the Bench, 1801; died 1812. **attenuated and fleeting:** thin and impalpable as a ghost.

19. **Jackson,** Richard: called to the Bench, 1770; died 1787. He was so widely read that Dr. Johnson styled him "the all-knowing."

know, if any man in the world did. He decided the orthography to be—as I have given it—fortifying his authority with such anatomical reasons as dismissed the manciple (for the time) learned and happy. Some do spell it yet perversely, *aitch* bone, from a fanciful resemblance between its shape, and that of the aspirate so denominated. I had almost forgotten Mingay with the iron hand—but he was somewhat later. He had lost his right hand by some accident, and supplied it with a grappling hook, which he wielded with a tolerable adroitness. I detected the substitute, before I was old enough to reason whether it were artificial or not. I remember the astonishment it raised in me. He was a blustering, loud-talking person; and I reconciled the phenomenon to my ideas as an emblem of power—somewhat like the horns in the forehead of Michael Angelo's Moses. Baron Maseres, who walks (or did till very lately) in the costume of the reign of George the Second, closes my imperfect recollections of the old benchers of the Inner Temple.

Fantastic forms, whither are ye fled? Or, if the like of you exist, why exist they no more for me? Ye inexplicable, half-understood appearances, why comes in reason to tear away the preternatural mist, bright or gloomy, that enshrouded you? Why make ye so sorry a figure in my relation, who made up to me—to my childish eyes—the mythology of the Temple? In those days I saw Gods, as "old men covered with a mantle,"

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5. **aitch bone:** the "H" bone, the rump of beef.

7. **Mingay,** James: called to the Bench, 1785; died 1787.

17. **Baron Maseres:** born 1731; died 1824.

26. **relation:** narrative.

28. **"old men covered with a mantle."** See page 123, line 30. This is Lamb's own idea of a phantom peculiarly terrible.

walking upon the earth. Let the dreams of classic idolatry perish,—extinct be the fairies and fairy trumpery of legendary fabling,—in the heart of childhood, there will, for ever, spring up a well of innocent or wholesome superstition—the seeds of exaggeration will be busy there, and vital—from every-day forms educing the unknown and the uncommon. In that little Goshen there will be light, when the grown world flounders about in the darkness of sense and materiality. While childhood, and while dreams, reducing childhood, shall be left, imagination shall not have spread her holy wings totally to fly the earth.

P.S.—I have done injustice to the soft shade of Samuel Salt. See what it is to trust to imperfect memory, and the erring notices of childhood! Yet I protest I always thought that he had been a bachelor! This gentleman, R. N. informs me, married young, and losing his lady in child-bed, within the first year of their union, fell into a deep melancholy, from the effects of which, probably, he never thoroughly recovered. In what a new light does this place his rejection (O call it by a gentler name!) of mild Susan P——, unravelling into beauty certain peculiarities of this very shy and retiring character!—Henceforth let no one receive the narratives of Elia for true records! They are, in truth, but shadows of fact—verisimilitudes, not verities—or sitting but upon the remote edges and outskirts of history. He is no such honest chronicler as R. N., and would have done better perhaps to have consulted that gentleman,

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2. **trumpery:** nonsense.

7. **Goshen.** See note on page 250. While the plague of darkness was over Egypt, Goshen was light.

10. **reducing childhood:** bringing childhood back again.

before he sent these incondite reminiscences to press. But the worthy sub-treasurer—who respects his old and his new masters—would but have been puzzled at the indecorous liberties of Elia. The good man wots not, peradventure, of the license which *Magazines* have arrived at in this plain-speaking age, or hardly dreams of their existence beyond the *Gentleman's*—his furthest monthly excursions in this nature having been long confined to the holy ground of honest *Urban's* obituary. May it be long before his own name shall help to swell those columns of unenvied flattery!—Meantime, O ye New Benchers of the Inner Temple, cherish him kindly, for he is himself the kindliest of human creatures. Should infirmities overtake him—he is yet in green and vigorous senility—make allowances for them, remembering that "ye yourselves are old." So may the Winged Horse, your ancient badge and cognizance, still flourish! so may future Hookers and Seldens illustrate your church and chambers! so may the sparrows, in default of more melodious quiristers, unpoisoned hop about your walks! so may the fresh-coloured and cleanly nursery-maid, who, by leave, airs her playful charge in your stately gardens, drop her prettiest blushing curtsy as ye pass, reductive of juvenescent emotion; so may the younkers of this generation eye you, pacing your stately terrace, with the same superstitious veneration, with which the child Elia gazed on the Old Worthies that solemnized the parade before ye!

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1. **incondite:** rough; unfinished.

16. **"ye yourselves are old."** Cf. "King Lear," II, iv, 190.

16–17. **Winged Horse.** See footnote to page 107, line 5.

20. **unpoisoned.** See page 114, lines 22–23.

24. **reductive of juvenescent emotion:** recalling the emotions of youth.

## XI. WITCHES AND OTHER NIGHT-FEARS

We are too hasty when we set down our ancestors in the gross for fools, for the monstrous inconsistencies (as they seem to us) involved in their creed of witchcraft. In the relations of this visible world we find them to have been as rational, and shrewd to detect an historic anomaly, as ourselves. But when once the invisible world was supposed to be opened, and the lawless agency of bad spirits assumed, what measures of probability, of decency, of fitness, or proportion—of that which distinguishes the likely from the palpable absurd—could they have to guide them in the rejection or admission of any particular testimony?—That maidens pined away, wasting inwardly as their waxen images consumed before a fire—that corn was lodged, and cattle lamed—that whirlwinds uptore in diabolic revelry the oaks of the forest—or that spits and kettles only danced a fearful-innocent vagary about some rustic's kitchen when no wind was stirring—were all equally probable where no law of agency was understood. That the prince of the powers of darkness, passing by the flower and pomp of the earth, should lay preposterous siege to the weak fantasy of indigent eld—has neither likelihood

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5–6. **historic anomaly**: something which the advance of history has pronounced an absurdity of past ignorance.

22. **weak fantasy of indigent eld**: the feeble imaginings of poor old people.

nor unlikelihood *à priori* to us, who have no measure to guess at his policy, or standard to estimate what rate those anile souls may fetch in the devil's market. Nor, when the wicked are expressly symbolized by a goat, was it to be wondered at so much, that *he* should come sometimes in that body, and assert his metaphor.—That the intercourse was opened at all between both worlds was perhaps the mistake—but that once assumed, I see no reason for disbelieving one attested story of this nature more than another on the score of absurdity. There is no law to judge of the lawless, or canon by which a dream may be criticized.

I have sometimes thought that I could not have existed in the days of received witchcraft; that I could not have slept in a village where one of those reputed hags dwelt. Our ancestors were bolder or more obtuse. Amidst the universal belief that these wretches were in league with the author of all evil, holding hell tributary to their muttering, no simple Justice of the Peace seems to have scrupled issuing, or silly Headborough serving, a warrant upon them—as if they should subpœna Satan! —Prospero in his boat, with his books and wand about

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1. **à priori:** reasoning from past experience.
3. **anile:** old woman's.
4. **wicked . . . symbolized by a goat.** Cf. Matthew, xxv, 31–46.
5. **he:** the devil.
6. **assert his metaphor:** prove the truth of the figurative comparison.
11. **canon:** a standard of judgment.
18–19. **holding hell tributary to their muttering:** could command the powers of darkness by their incantations.
21. **subpœna:** to command appearance in court under penalty for failure to appear.
22. **Prospero:** the good magician in "The Tempest." Cf. Act I, Sc. ii.

him, suffers himself to be conveyed away at the mercy of his enemies to an unknown island. He might have raised a storm or two, we think, on the passage. His acquiescence is in exact analogy to the non-resistance of witches to the constituted powers.—What stops the Fiend in Spenser from tearing Guyon to pieces—or who had made it a condition of his prey, that Guyon must take assay of the glorious bait—we have no guess. We do not know the laws of that country.

From my childhood I was extremely inquisitive about witches and witch-stories. My maid, and more legendary aunt, supplied me with good store. But I shall mention the accident which directed my curiosity originally into this channel. In my father's book-closet, the History of the Bible, by Stackhouse, occupied a distinguished station. The pictures with which it abounds—one of the ark, in particular, and another of Solomon's temple, delineated with all the fidelity of ocular admeasurement, as if the artist had been upon the spot—attracted my childish attention. There was a picture, too, of the Witch raising up Samuel, which I wish that I had never seen. We shall come to that hereafter. Stackhouse is in two huge tomes—and there was a pleasure in removing folios of that magnitude, which, with

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3–4. **His acquiescence is in exact analogy,** etc.: Prospero's submission to the decree of banishment can be as little understood as the helplessness of the witches when summoned into court. If they can command hell, why should they thus submit without opposition?

8. **take assay:** make a test of.

18–19. **delineated with all the fidelity of ocular admeasurement:** drawn as faithfully as though the artist had really seen it.

21. **the Witch raising up Samuel:** the Witch of Endor summoning Samuel from the dead in answer to Saul's demand. Cf. I Samuel, xxviii, 8–14.

infinite straining, was as much as I could manage, from the situation which they occupied upon an upper shelf. I have not met with the work from that time to this, but I remember it consisted of Old Testament stories, orderly set down, with the *objection* appended to each story, and the *solution* of the objection regularly tacked to that. The *objection* was a summary of whatever difficulties had been opposed to the credibility of the history, by the shrewdness of ancient or modern infidelity, drawn up with an almost complimentary excess of candour. The *solution* was brief, modest, and satisfactory. The bane and antidote were both before you. To doubts so put, and so quashed, there seemed to be an end for ever. The dragon lay dead, for the foot of the veriest babe to trample on. But—like as was rather feared than realized from that slain monster in Spenser—from the womb of those crushed errors young dragonets would creep, exceeding the prowess of so tender a Saint George as myself to vanquish. The habit of expecting objections to every passage, set me upon starting more objections, for the glory of finding a solution of my own for them. I became staggered and perplexed, a sceptic in long-coats. The pretty Bible stories which I had read, or heard read in church, lost their purity and sincerity of impression, and were turned into so many historic or chronologic theses to be defended against whatever impugners. I was not to disbelieve them, but—the next thing to that—I was to be quite sure that some one or other would or had disbelieved them. Next to making a child an infidel, is the letting him know that there are infidels at all. Credulity is the man's weak-

25–26. **historic or chronologic theses:** facts or dates for discussion.

27. **impugners:** those who assail with arguments.

ness, but the child's strength. O, how ugly sound scriptural doubts from the mouth of a babe and a suckling! —I should have lost myself in these mazes, and have pined away, I think, with such unfit sustenance as these husks afforded, but for a fortunate piece of ill-fortune, which about this time befell me. Turning over the picture of the ark with too much haste, I unhappily made a breach in its ingenious fabric—driving my inconsiderate fingers right through the two larger quadrupeds—the elephant and the camel—that stare (as well they might) out of the two last windows next the steerage in that unique piece of naval architecture. Stackhouse was henceforth locked up, and became an interdicted treasure. With the book, the *objections* and *solutions* gradually cleared out of my head, and have seldom returned since in any force to trouble me.—But there was one impression which I had imbibed from Stackhouse, which no lock or bar could shut out, and which was destined to try my childish nerves rather more seriously.—That detestable picture!

I was dreadfully alive to nervous terrors. The night-time solitude, and the dark, were my hell. The sufferings I endured in this nature would justify the expression. I never laid my head on my pillow, I suppose from the fourth to the seventh or eighth year of my life —so far as memory serves in things so long ago—without an assurance, which realized its own prophecy, of seeing some frightful spectre. Be old Stackhouse then acquitted in part, if I say, that to his picture of the Witch raising up Samuel—(O that old man covered with a mantle!) I owe—not my midnight terrors, the hell of my infancy—but the shape and manner of their visitation. It was he who dressed up for me a hag that nightly sate upon my pillow—a sure bed-fellow, when

my aunt or my maid was far from me. All day long, while the book was permitted me, I dreamed waking over his delineation, and at night (if I may use so bold an expression) awoke into sleep, and found the vision true. I durst not, even in the daylight, once enter the chamber where I slept, without my face turned to the window, aversely from the bed where my witch-ridden pillow was.—Parents do not know what they do when they leave tender babes alone to go to sleep in the dark. The feeling about for a friendly arm—the hoping for a familiar voice—when they wake screaming—and find none to soothe them—what a terrible shaking it is to their poor nerves! The keeping them up till midnight, through candle-light and the unwholesome hours, as they are called,—would, I am satisfied, in a medical point of view, prove the better caution.—That detestable picture, as I have said, gave the fashion to my dreams—if dreams they were—for the scene of them was invariably the room in which I lay. Had I never met with the picture, the fears would have come self-pictured in some shape or other—

Headless bear, black man, or ape,—

but, as it was, my imaginations took that form.—It is not book, or picture, or the stories of foolish servants, which create these terrors in children. They can at most but give them a direction. Dear little T. H., who of all

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8–13. In this passage Lamb is doubtless living over again his childhood experiences, and the experiences of many who came under his observation, at Christ's Hospital. Many of the boys there were of tender age. Lamb was entered when he was seven years old.

22. From "The Author's Abstract of Melancholy," prefixed to Burton's "Anatomy of Melancholy."

26. T. H.: Thornton Hunt, Leigh Hunt's eldest boy.

children has been brought up with the most scrupulous exclusion of every taint of superstition—who was never allowed to hear of goblin or apparition, or scarcely to be told of bad men, or to read or hear of any distressing story—finds all this world of fear, from which he has been so rigidly excluded *ab extra*, in his own "thick-coming fancies;" and from his little midnight pillow, this nurse-child of optimism will start at shapes, unborrowed of tradition, in sweats to which the reveries of the cell-damned murderer are tranquillity.

Gorgons, and Hydras, and Chimæras dire—stories of Celæno and the Harpies—may reproduce themselves in the brain of superstition—but they were there before. They are transcripts, types—the archetypes are in us, and eternal. How else should the recital of that, which we know in a waking sense to be false, come to affect us at all?—or

> —— Names, whose sense we see not,
> Fray us with things that be not?

Is it that we naturally conceive terror from such objects, considered in their capacity of being able to inflict upon us bodily injury?—O, least of all! These terrors are of older standing. They date beyond body — or, without the body, they would have been the same. All the cruel, tormenting, defined devils in Dante — tearing, mangling, choking, stifling, scorching demons—are they one half so fearful to the spirit of a

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6. **ab extra:** from without.
6–7. **"thick-coming fancies."** Cf. "Macbeth," V, iii, 38.
8. **nurse-child of optimism:** fed on hopeful and happy thoughts.
14. **archetypes:** primitive models which are imitated.
18–19. Cf. Spenser's "Epithalamium," line 343.

man, as the simple idea of a spirit unembodied following him—

> Like one that on a lonesome road
> Doth walk in fear and dread,
> And having once turn'd round, walks on,
> And turns no more his head;
> Because he knows a frightful fiend
> Doth close behind him tread.[1]

That the kind of fear here treated of is purely spiritual —that it is strong in proportion as it is objectless upon earth—that it predominates in the period of sinless infancy—are difficulties, the solution of which might afford some probable insight into our ante-mundane condition, and a peep at least into the shadow-land of pre-existence.

My night fancies have long ceased to be afflictive. I confess an occasional nightmare; but I do not, as in early youth, keep a stud of them. Fiendish faces, with the extinguished taper, will come and look at me; but I know them for mockeries, even while I cannot elude their presence, and I fight and grapple with them. For the credit of my imagination, I am almost ashamed to say how tame and prosaic my dreams are grown. They are never romantic, seldom even rural. They are of architecture and of buildings—cities abroad, which I have never seen, and hardly have hope to see. I have traversed, for the seeming length of a natural day, Rome, Amsterdam, Paris, Lisbon—their churches, palaces, squares, market-places, shops, suburbs, ruins, with

[1] Mr. Coleridge's *Ancient Mariner*.

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10–11. **objectless upon earth:** having no earthly form or substance.

13. **ante-mundane:** before one's birth.

an inexpressible sense of delight—a map-like distinctness of trace—and a daylight vividness of vision, that was all but being awake.—I have formerly travelled among Westmoreland fells — my highest Alps, — but they are objects too mighty for the grasp of my dreaming recognition; and I have again and again awoke with ineffectual struggles of the inner eye, to make out a shape in any way whatever, of Helvellyn. Methought I was in that country, but the mountains were gone. The poverty of my dreams mortifies me. There is Coleridge, at his will can conjure up icy domes, and pleasure-houses for Kubla Khan, and Abyssinian maids, and songs of Abara, and caverns,

Where Alph, the sacred river, runs,

to solace his night solitudes—when I cannot muster a fiddle. Barry Cornwall has his tritons and his nereids gamboling before him in nocturnal visions, and proclaiming sons born to Neptune—when my stretch of imaginative activity can hardly, in the night season, raise up the ghost of a fish-wife. To set my failures in somewhat a mortifying light—it was after reading the noble Dream of this poet, that my fancy ran strong upon these marine spectra; and the poor plastic power, such as it is, within me set to work, to humour my folly in a sort of dream that very night. Methought I was upon the ocean billows at some sea nuptials, riding and mounted high, with the customary train sounding their

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4. **Westmoreland fells:** the barren hills of the "Lake District," in England.

8. **Helvellyn:** the second highest peak in the "Lake District" (3,118 feet above sea level).

23. **marine spectra:** sea apparitions.

27. **customary train sounding their conchs:** Neptune's usual attendants sounding their horns of sea-shell.

conchs before me (I myself, you may be sure, the *leading god*), and jollily we went careering over the main, till just where Ino Leucothea should have greeted me (I think it was Ino) with a white embrace, the billows gradually subsiding, fell from a sea-roughness to a sea-calm, and thence to a river-motion, and that river (as happens in the familiarization of dreams) was no other than the gentle Thames, which landed me, in the wafture of a placid wave or two, alone, safe and inglorious, somewhere at the foot of Lambeth Palace.

The degree of the soul's creativeness in sleep might furnish no whimsical criterion of the quantum of poetical faculty resident in the same soul waking. An old gentleman, a friend of mine, and a humourist, used to carry this notion so far, that when he saw any stripling of his acquaintance ambitious of becoming a poet, his first question would be,—"Young man, what sort of dreams have you?" I have so much faith in my old friend's theory, that when I feel that idle vein returning upon me, I presently subside into my proper element of prose, remembering those eluding nereids, and that inauspicious inland landing.

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10. **Lambeth Palace**: the residence of the Archbishop of Canterbury, on the Surrey side of the Thames.

12. **no whimsical criterion of the quantum**: a serious estimate of the amount.

## XII. GRACE BEFORE MEAT

THE custom of saying grace at meals had, probably, its origin in the early times of the world, and the hunter-state of man, when dinners were precarious things, and a full meal was something more than a common blessing; when a bellyful was a windfall, and looked like a special providence. In the shouts and triumphal songs with which, after a season of sharp abstinence, a lucky booty of deer's or goat's flesh would naturally be ushered home, existed, perhaps, the germ of the modern grace. It is not otherwise easy to be understood, why the blessing of food—the act of eating—should have had a particular expression of thanksgiving annexed to it, distinct from that implied and silent gratitude with which we are expected to enter upon the enjoyment of the many other various gifts and good things of existence.

I own that I am disposed to say grace upon twenty other occasions in the course of the day besides my dinner. I want a form for setting out upon a pleasant walk, for a moonlight ramble, for a friendly meeting, or a solved problem. Why have we none for books, those spiritual repasts—a grace before Milton—a grace before Shakespeare—a devotional exercise proper to be said before reading the Faërie Queene?—but, the received ritual having prescribed these forms to the solitary ceremony of manducation, I shall confine my ob-

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25. **manducation:** eating.

servations to the experience which I have had of the grace, properly so called; commending my new scheme for extension to a niche in the grand philosophical, poetical, and perchance in part heretical, liturgy, now compiling by my friend Homo Humanus, for the use of a certain snug congregation of Utopian Rabelæsian Christians, no matter where assembled.

The form then of the benediction before eating has its beauty at a poor man's table, or at the simple and unprovocative repasts of children. It is here that the grace becomes exceedingly graceful. The indigent man, who hardly knows whether he shall have a meal the next day or not, sits down to his fare with a present sense of the blessing, which can be but feebly acted by the rich, into whose minds the conception of wanting a dinner could never, but by some extreme theory, have entered. The proper end of food—the animal sustenance—is barely contemplated by them. The poor man's bread is his daily bread, literally his bread for the day. Their courses are perennial.

Again, the plainest diet seems the fittest to be preceded by the grace. That which is least stimulative to appetite, leaves the mind most free for foreign considerations. A man may feel thankful, heartily thankful, over a dish of plain mutton with turnips, and have leisure to reflect upon the ordinance and institution of eating; when he shall confess a perturbation of mind, in-

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4. **liturgy**: a ritual; a prescribed form for public worship.

5. **Homo Humanus**: mankind. No individual is referred to, as far as known.

9–10. **unprovocative repasts**: meals so simple as not to provoke the desires of those who sit down to them.

20. **Their courses are perennial**: the meals of the rich, with their many courses, go on from year to year.

consistent with the purposes of the grace, at the presence of venison or turtle. When I have sate (a *rarus hospes*) at rich men's tables, with the savoury soup and messes steaming up the nostrils, and moistening the lips of the guests with desire and a distracted choice, I have felt the introduction of that ceremony to be unseasonable. With the ravenous orgasm upon you, it seems impertinent to interpose a religious sentiment. It is a confusion of purpose to mutter out praises from a mouth that waters. The heats of epicurism put out the gentle flame of devotion. The incense which rises round is pagan, and the belly-god intercepts it for his own. The very excess of the provision beyond the needs, takes away all sense of proportion between the end and means. The giver is veiled by his gifts. You are startled at the injustice of returning thanks—for what?—for having too much, while so many starve. It is to praise the Gods amiss.

I have observed this awkwardness felt, scarce consciously perhaps, by the good man who says the grace. I have seen it in clergymen and others—a sort of shame—a sense of the co-presence of circumstances which unhallow the blessing. After a devotional tone put on for a few seconds, how rapidly the speaker will fall into his common voice, helping himself or his neighbour, as if to get rid of some uneasy sensation of hypocrisy. Not that the good man was a hypocrite, or was not most conscientious in the discharge of the duty; but he felt in his inmost mind the incompatibility of the scene and the viands before him with the exercise of a calm and rational gratitude.

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2. **rarus hospes**: infrequent guest.
7. **ravenous orgasm**: excitement of appetite.

I hear somebody exclaim,—Would you have Christians sit down at table, like hogs to their troughs, without remembering the Giver?—no—I would have them sit down as Christians, remembering the Giver, and less like hogs. Or if their appetites must run riot, and they must pamper themselves with delicacies for which east and west are ransacked, I would have them postpone their benediction to a fitter season, when appetite is laid; when the still small voice can be heard, and the reason of the grace returns—with temperate diet and restricted dishes. Gluttony and surfeiting are no proper occasions for thanksgiving. When Jeshurun waxed fat, we read that he kicked. Virgil knew the harpy-nature better, when he put into the mouth of Celæno anything but a blessing. We may be gratefully sensible of the deliciousness of some kinds of food beyond others, though that is a meaner and inferior gratitude: but the proper object of the grace is sustenance, not relishes; daily bread, not delicacies; the means of life, and not the means of pampering the carcass. With what frame or composure, I wonder, can a city chaplain pronounce his benediction at some great Hall feast, when he knows that his last concluding pious word—and that, in all probability, the sacred name which he preaches—is but the signal for so many impatient harpies to commence their foul orgies, with as little sense of true thankfulness (which is temperance) as those Virgilian fowl! It is well if the good man himself does not feel his devotions a little clouded, those foggy sensuous

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9. **the still small voice.** Cf. I Kings, xix, 12.

12. **Jeshurun.** Cf. Deuteronomy, xxxii, 15.

13. **Virgil knew the harpy-nature better,** etc. See note on page 270.

20. **frame:** frame of mind.

streams mingling with and polluting the pure altar sacrifice.

The severest satire upon full tables and surfeits is the banquet which Satan, in the Paradise Regained, provides for a temptation in the wilderness:

> A table richly spread in regal mode,
> With dishes piled, and meats of noblest sort
> And savour; beasts of chase, or fowl of game,
> In pastry built, or from the spit, or boil'd,
> Gris-amber-steam'd; all fish from sea or shore,
> Freshet or purling brook, for which was drain'd
> Pontus, and Lucrine bay, and Afric coast.

The tempter, I warrant you, thought these cates would go down without the recommendatory preface of a benediction. They are like to be short graces where the devil plays the host.—I am afraid the poet wants his usual decorum in this place. Was he thinking of the old Roman luxury, or of a gaudy day at Cambridge? This was a temptation fitter for a Heliogabalus. The whole banquet is too civic and culinary, and the accompaniments altogether a profanation of that deep, abstracted, holy scene. The mighty artillery of sauces, which the cook-fiend conjures up, is out of proportion to the simple wants and plain hunger of the guest. He that disturbed him in his dreams, from his dreams might have been taught better. To the temperate fantasies of the famished Son of God, what sort of feasts presented themselves?—He dreamed indeed,

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4. Milton's "Paradise Regained," II, 337–347.

10. **Gris-amber,** or ambergris: a fat from the sperm whale, formerly much used in cooking because of its aroma.

13. **cates:** dainties.

16. **wants:** lacks.

18. **gaudy day:** holiday.

——— As appetite is wont to dream,
Of meats and drinks, nature's refreshment sweet.

But what meats?

Him thought, he by the brook of Cherith stood,
And saw the ravens with their horny beaks
Food to Elijah bringing even and morn;
Though ravenous, taught to abstain from what they brought:
He saw the prophet also how he fled
Into the desert, and how there he slept
Under a juniper; then how awaked
He found his supper on the coals prepared,
And by the angel was bid rise and eat,
And ate the second time after repose,
The strength whereof sufficed him forty days:
Sometimes, that with Elijah he partook,
Or as a guest with Daniel at his pulse.

Nothing in Milton is finelier fancied than these temperate dreams of the divine Hungerer. To which of these two visionary banquets, think you, would the introduction of what is called the grace have been most fitting and pertinent.

Theoretically I am no enemy to graces; but practically I own that (before meat especially) they seem to involve something awkward and unseasonable. Our appetites, of one or another kind, are excellent spurs to our reason, which might otherwise but feebly set about the great ends of preserving and continuing the species. They are fit blessings to be contemplated at a distance

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1–2. "Paradise Regained," II, 264–265.

4–17. "Paradise Regained," II, 266–279. For the Bible account, see I Kings, xvii, 2–6; I Kings, xix, 2–8.

17. **pulse**: dried peas. Cf. Daniel, i, 11–16.

with a becoming gratitude; but the moment of appetite (the judicious reader will apprehend me) is, perhaps, the least fit season for that exercise. The Quakers who go about their business, of every description, with more calmness than we, have more title to the use of these benedictory prefaces. I have always admired their silent grace, and the more because I have observed their applications to the meat and drink following to be less passionate and sensual than ours. They are neither gluttons nor wine-bibbers as a people. They eat, as a horse bolts his chopped hay, with indifference, calmness, and cleanly circumstances. They neither grease nor slop themselves. When I see a citizen in his bib and tucker, I cannot imagine it a surplice.

I am no Quaker at my food. I confess I am not indifferent to the kinds of it. Those unctuous morsels of deer's flesh were not made to be received with dispassionate services. I hate a man who swallows it, affecting not to know what he is eating. I suspect his taste in higher matters. I shrink instinctively from one who professes to like minced veal. There is a physiognomical character in the tastes for food. C—— holds that a man cannot have a pure mind who refuses apple-dumplings. I am not certain but he is right. With the decay of my first innocence, I confess a less and less relish daily for those innocuous cates. The whole vegetable tribe have lost their gust with me. Only I stick to asparagus,

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14. **surplice**: a priest's robe.

21. **physiognomical**: appearance of the face; or, as here, the ability to read character by the appearance of the face. In like manner Lamb reads character by taste in the matter of food.

22. **C——**: Coleridge.

26. **innocuous cates**: harmless dainties.

27. **gust**: relish.

which still seems to inspire gentle thoughts. I am impatient and querulous under culinary disappointments, as to come home at the dinner hour, for instance, expecting some savoury mess, and to find one quite tasteless and sapidless. Butter ill melted—that commonest of kitchen failures—puts me beside my tenour.—The author of the Rambler used to make inarticulate animal noises over a favourite food. Was this the music quite proper to be preceded by the grace? or would the pious man have done better to postpone his devotions to a season when the blessing might be contemplated with less perturbation? I quarrel with no man's tastes, nor would set my thin face against those excellent things, in their way, jollity and feasting. But as these exercises, however laudable, have little in them of grace or gracefulness, a man should be sure, before he ventures so to grace them, that while he is pretending his devotions otherwhere, he is not secretly kissing his hand to some great fish—his Dagon—with a special consecration of no ark but the fat tureen before him. Graces are the sweet preluding strains to the banquets of angels and children; to the roots and severer repasts of the Chartreuse; to the slender, but not slenderly acknowledged, refection of the poor and humble man: but at the heaped-up boards of the pampered and the luxurious they become of dissonant mood, less timed and tuned to the occasion, methinks, than the noise of those better befitting organs would be, which children hear tales of, at Hog's Norton. We sit too long at our meals, or are

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5. **sapidless:** lacking savor.

6. **puts me beside my tenour:** makes me impatient.

19. **Dagon:** the national god of the Philistines, represented as half man, half fish. See I Samuel, v, 1–5.

22–23. **Chartreuse:** the Carthusian monks. See note on page 259.

too curious in the study of them, or too disordered in our application to them, or engross too great a portion of those good things (which should be common) to our share, to be able with any grace to say grace. To be thankful for what we grasp exceeding our proportion is to add hypocrisy to injustice. A lurking sense of this truth is what makes the performance of this duty so cold and spiritless a service at most tables. In houses where the grace is as indispensable as the napkin, who has not seen that never settled question arise, as to *who shall say it;* while the good man of the house and the visitor clergyman, or some other guest belike of next authority from years or gravity, shall be bandying about the office between them as a matter of compliment, each of them not unwilling to shift the awkward burthen of an equivocal duty from his own shoulders?

I once drank tea in company with two Methodist divines of different persuasions, whom it was my fortune to introduce to each other for the first time that evening. Before the first cup was handed round, one of these reverend gentlemen put it to the other, with all due solemnity, whether he chose to *say anything.* It seems it is the custom with some sectaries to put up a short prayer before this meal also. His reverend brother did not at first quite apprehend him, but upon an explanation, with little less importance he made answer, that it was not a custom known in his church: in which courteous evasion the other acquiescing for good manners' sake, or in compliance with a weak brother, the supplementary or tea-grace was waived altogether. With what

1. **curious:** ingenious; elaborate.
24. **sectaries:** dissenters.
30. **weak brother.** Cf. I Corinthians, viii, 11.

spirit might not Lucian have painted two priests, of *his* religion, playing into each other's hands the compliment of performing or omitting a sacrifice,—the hungry God meantime, doubtful of his incense, with expectant nostrils hovering over the two flamens, and (as between two stools) going away in the end without his supper.

A short form upon these occasions is felt to want reverence; a long one, I am afraid, cannot escape the charge of impertinence. I do not quite approve of the epigrammatic conciseness with which that equivocal wag (but my pleasant school-fellow) C. V. L., when importuned for a grace, used to inquire, first slyly leering down the table, "Is there no clergyman here?"—significantly adding, "Thank G—." Nor do I think our old form at school quite pertinent, where we were used to preface our bald bread and cheese suppers with a preamble, connecting with that humble blessing a recognition of benefits the most awful and overwhelming to the imagination which religion has to offer. *Non tunc illis erat locus.* I remember we were put to it to reconcile the phrase "good creatures," upon which the blessing rested, with the fare set before us, wilfully understanding that expression in a low and animal sense,—till some one recalled a legend, which told how in the golden days of Christ's, the young Hospitallers were wont to have smoking joints of roast meat upon their nightly boards, till

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5. **flamens:** priests.

5–6. **as between two stools.** The old proverb "to fall between two stools" means to fail of advantage on either hand when hesitating between two opportunities.

12. **C. V. L.:** Charles Valentine Le Grice. See note on page 251.

20. **Non tunc illis erat locus:** there was no place for them.

some pious benefactor, commiserating the decencies, rather than the palates, of the children, commuted our flesh for garments, and gave us—*horresco referens*—trousers instead of mutton.

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1–2. **commiserating the decencies, rather than the palates:** taking pity on their lack of clothing rather than their lack of good food.

3. **horresco referens:** I shudder at the mention of it.

4. **trousers instead of mutton.** Leigh Hunt tells the story in his account of Christ's Hospital.

## XIII. DREAM-CHILDREN: A REVERIE

CHILDREN love to listen to stories about their elders, when *they* were children; to stretch their imagination to the conception of a traditionary great-uncle, or grandame, whom they never saw. It was in this spirit that my little ones crept about me the other evening to hear about their great-grandmother Field, who lived in a great house in Norfolk (a hundred times bigger than that in which they and papa lived) which had been the scene—so at least it was generally believed in that part of the country—of the tragic incidents which they had lately become familiar with from the ballad of the Children in the Wood. Certain it is that the whole story of the children and their cruel uncle was to be seen fairly carved out in wood upon the chimney-piece of the great hall, the whole story down to the Robin Redbreasts, till a foolish rich person pulled it down to set up a marble one of modern invention in its stead, with no story upon it. Here Alice put out one of her dear mother's looks, too tender to be called upbraiding. Then I went on to say, how religious and how good their great-grandmother Field was, how beloved and respected by everybody, though she was not indeed the mistress of this great house, but had only the charge of it (and yet in

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7. **Norfolk:** a fiction, intended to mislead. The house was situated in Blakesware, in Hertfordshire, as described in the essay, "Blakesmoor in H——shire." See page 223.

some respects she might be said to be the mistress of it too) committed to her by the owner, who preferred living in a newer and more fashionable mansion which he had purchased somewhere in the adjoining county; but still she lived in it in a manner as if it had been her own, and kept up the dignity of the great house in a sort while she lived, which afterwards came to decay, and was nearly pulled down, and all its old ornaments stripped and carried away to the owner's other house, where they were set up, and looked as awkward as if some one were to carry away the old tombs they had seen lately at the Abbey, and stick them up in Lady C.'s tawdry gilt drawing-room. Here John smiled, as much as to say, "that would be foolish indeed." And then I told how, when she came to die, her funeral was attended by a concourse of all the poor, and some of the gentry too, of the neighbourhood for many miles round, to show their respect for her memory, because she had been such a good and religious woman; so good indeed that she knew all the Psaltery by heart, ay, and a great part of the Testament besides. Here little Alice spread her hands. Then I told what a tall, upright, graceful person their great-grandmother Field once was; and how in her youth she was esteemed the best dancer—here Alice's little right foot played an involuntary movement, till, upon my looking grave, it desisted—the best dancer, I was saying, in the county, till a cruel disease, called cancer, came, and bowed her down with pain; but it could never bend her good spirits, or make them stoop, but they were still upright, because she was so good and religious. Then I told how she used to sleep by herself in a lone chamber of the great lone house; and

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12. **the Abbey:** Westminster.

how she believed that an apparition of two infants was to be seen at midnight gliding up and down the great staircase near where she slept, but she said "those innocents would do her no harm;" and how frightened I used to be, though in those days I had my maid to sleep with me, because I was never half so good or religious as she—and yet I never saw the infants. Here John expanded all his eyebrows and tried to look courageous. Then I told how good she was to all her grandchildren, having us to the great house in the holidays, where I in particular used to spend many hours by myself, in gazing upon the old busts of the twelve Cæsars, that had been Emperors of Rome, till the old marble heads would seem to live again, or I to be turned into marble with them; how I never could be tired with roaming about that huge mansion, with its vast empty rooms, with their worn-out hangings, fluttering tapestry, and carved oaken panels, with the gilding almost rubbed out—sometimes in the spacious old-fashioned gardens, which I had almost to myself, unless when now and then a solitary gardening man would cross me—and how the nectarines and peaches hung upon the walls, without my ever offering to pluck them, because they were forbidden fruit, unless now and then,—and because I had more pleasure in strolling about among the old melancholy-looking yew-trees, or the firs, and picking up the red berries, and the fir apples, which were good for nothing but to look at—or in lying about upon the fresh grass, with all the fine garden smells around me—or basking in the orangery, till I could almost fancy myself ripening too along with the oranges and the limes in that grateful warmth—or in watching the dace that darted to and fro in the fish-

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27. **fir apples:** the cones of the fir tree.

pond, at the bottom of the garden, with here and there a great sulky pike hanging midway down the water in silent state, as if it mocked at their impertinent friskings,—I had more pleasure in these busy-idle diversions than in all the sweet flavours of peaches, nectarines, oranges, and such like common baits of children. Here John slyly deposited back upon the plate a bunch of grapes, which, not unobserved by Alice, he had meditated dividing with her, and both seemed willing to relinquish them for the present as irrelevant. Then in somewhat a more heightened tone, I told how, though their great-grandmother Field loved all her grandchildren, yet in an especial manner she might be said to love their uncle, John L——, because he was so handsome and spirited a youth, and a king to the rest of us; and, instead of moping about in solitary corners, like some of us, he would mount the most mettlesome horse he could get, when but an imp no bigger than themselves, and make it carry him half over the county in a morning, and join the hunters when there were any out— and yet he loved the old great house and gardens too, but had too much spirit to be always pent up within their boundaries—and how their uncle grew up to man's estate as brave as he was handsome, to the admiration of everybody, but of their great-grandmother Field most especially; and how he used to carry me upon his back when I was a lame-footed boy—for he was a good bit older than me—many a mile when I could not walk for pain;—and how in after-life he became lame-footed too, and I did not always (I fear) make allowances enough for him when he was impatient, and in pain, nor remem-

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6. **baits**: temptations.
14. **John L——**: John Lamb.

ber sufficiently how considerate he had been to me when I was lame-footed; and how when he died, though he had not been dead an hour, it seemed as if he had died a great while ago, such a distance there is betwixt life and death; and how I bore his death as I thought pretty well at first, but afterwards it haunted and haunted me; and though I did not cry or take it to heart as some do, and as I think he would have done if I had died, yet I missed him all day long, and knew not till then how much I had loved him. I missed his kindness, and I missed his crossness, and wished him to be alive again, to be quarrelling with him (for we quarrelled sometimes), rather than not have him again, and was as uneasy without him, as he their poor uncle must have been when the doctor took off his limb. Here the children fell a-crying, and asked if their little mourning which they had on was not for uncle John, and they looked up, and prayed me not to go on about their uncle, but to tell them some stories about their pretty dead mother. Then I told how for seven long years, in hope sometimes, sometimes in despair, yet persisting ever, I courted the fair Alice W——n; and, as much as children could understand, I explained to them what coyness, and difficulty, and denial meant in maidens—when suddenly, turning to Alice, the soul of the first Alice looked out at her eyes with such a reality of re-presentment, that I became in doubt which of them stood there before me, or whose that bright hair was; and while I stood gazing, both the children gradually grew fainter to my view, receding, and still receding till nothing at last but two mournful features were seen in the uttermost distance, which, without speech, strangely impressed upon

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22. **Alice W——n.** See note on page 256.

me the effects of speech: "We are not of Alice, nor of thee, nor are we children at all. The children of Alice call Bartrum father. We are nothing; less than nothing, and dreams. We are only what might have been, and must wait upon the tedious shores of Lethe millions of ages before we have existence, and a name"——and immediately awaking, I found myself quietly seated in my bachelor arm-chair, where I had fallen asleep, with the faithful Bridget unchanged by my side—but John L. (or James Elia) was gone forever.

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3. **Bartrum.** See note on page 256.

## XIV. DISTANT CORRESPONDENTS

*In a letter to B. F., Esq., at Sydney, New South Wales*

My dear F.—When I think how welcome the sight of a letter from the world where you were born must be to you in that strange one to which you have been transplanted, I feel some compunctious visitings at my long silence. But, indeed, it is no easy effort to set about a correspondence at our distance. The weary world of waters between us oppresses the imagination. It is difficult to conceive how a scrawl of mine should ever stretch across it. It is a sort of presumption to expect that one's thoughts should live so far. It is like writing for posterity; and reminds me of one of Mrs. Rowe's superscriptions, "Alcander to Strephon, in the Shades." Cowley's Post-Angel is no more than would be expedient in such an intercourse. One drops a packet at Lombard-street, and in twenty-four hours a friend in Cumberland gets it as fresh as if it came in ice. It is only like whispering through a long trumpet. But suppose a tube let down from the moon, with yourself at one end, and *the man* at the other; it would be some balk to the spirit of conversation, if you knew that the dialogue exchanged with that interesting theosophist

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4. **compunctious visitings**: stings of conscience.

11. Elizabeth **Rowe** (1674–1737) wrote "Friendship in Death, in Twenty Letters from the Dead to the Living."

would take two or three revolutions of a higher luminary in its passage. Yet for aught I know, you may be some parasangs nigher that primitive idea—Plato's man—than we in England here have the honour to reckon ourselves.

Epistolary matter usually compriseth three topics; news, sentiment, and puns. In the latter, I include all non-serious subjects; or subjects serious in themselves, but treated after my fashion, non-seriously.—And first, for news. In them the most desirable circumstance, I suppose, is that they shall be true. But what security can I have that what I now send you for truth shall not before you get it unaccountably turn into a lie? For instance, our mutual friend P. is at this present writing —*my Now*—in good health, and enjoys a fair share of worldly reputation. You are glad to hear it. This is natural and friendly. But at this present reading—*your Now*—he may possibly be in the Bench, or going to be hanged, which in reason ought to abate something of your transport (*i.e.*, at hearing he was well, &c.), or at least considerably to modify it. I am going to the play this evening, to have a laugh with Munden. You have no theatre, I think you told me, in your land of d——d realities. You naturally lick your lips, and envy me my felicity. Think but a moment, and you will correct the hateful emotion. Why, it is Sunday morning with you, and 1823. This confusion of tenses, this grand solecism of *two presents*, is in a degree common to all

1. **two or three revolutions of a higher luminary:** two or three years—revolutions of (about) the sun.

3. **parasangs.** A parasang was a Persian road measure, not accurately measuring distance, but rather indicating time employed in traversing a given distance.

22. **Munden.** See essay, "On the Acting of Munden."

28. **solecism:** incongruity.

postage. But if I sent you word to Bath or the Devises, that I was expecting the aforesaid treat this evening, though at the moment you received the intelligence my full feast of fun would be over, yet there would be for a day or two after, as you would well know, a smack, a relish left upon my mental palate, which would give rational encouragement for you to foster a portion at least of the disagreeable passion, which it was in part my intention to produce. But ten months hence your envy or your sympathy would be as useless as a passion spent upon the dead. Not only does truth, in these long intervals, un-essence herself, but (what is harder) one cannot venture a crude fiction for the fear that it may ripen into a truth upon the voyage. What a wild improbable banter I put upon you some three years since ——of Will Weatherall having married a servant-maid! I remember gravely consulting you how we were to receive her—for Will's wife was in no case to be rejected; and your no less serious replication in the matter; how tenderly you advised an abstemious introduction of literary topics before the lady, with a caution not to be too forward in bringing on the carpet matters more within the sphere of her intelligence; your deliberate judgment, or rather wise suspension of sentence, how far jacks, and spits, and mops could with propriety be introduced as subjects; whether the conscious avoiding of all such matters in discourse would not have a worse look than the taking of them casually in our way; in what manner we should carry ourselves to our maid Becky, Mrs. William Weatherall being by; whether we should show more delicacy, and a truer sense of respect

12. **un-essence**: divest herself of her true nature.
19. **replication**: reply.
22. **bringing on the carpet**: calling up for discussion.

for Will's wife, by treating Becky with our customary chiding before her, or by an unusual deferential civility paid to Becky as to a person of great worth, but thrown by the caprice of fate into a humble station. There were difficulties, I remember, on both sides, which you did me the favour to state with the precision of a lawyer, united to the tenderness of a friend. I laughed in my sleeve at your solemn pleadings, when lo! while I was valuing myself upon this flam put upon you in New South Wales, the devil in England, jealous possibly of any lie-children not his own, or working after my copy, has actually instigated our friend (not three days since) to the commission of a matrimony, which I had only conjured up for your diversion. William Weatherall has married Mrs. Cotterel's maid. But to take it in its truest sense, you will see, my dear F., that news from me must become history to you; which I neither profess to write, nor indeed care much for reading. No person, under a diviner, can with any prospect of veracity conduct a correspondence at such an arm's length. Two prophets, indeed, might thus interchange intelligence with effect; the epoch of the writer (Habakkuk) falling in with the true present time of the receiver (Daniel); but then we are no prophets.

Then as to sentiment. It fares little better with that. This kind of dish, above all, requires to be served up hot; or sent off in water-plates, that your friend may have it almost as warm as yourself. If it have time to cool, it is the most tasteless of all cold meats. I have often smiled at a conceit of the late Lord C. It seems that travelling somewhere about Geneva, he came to

19. **under a diviner:** of less prophetic power than a seer.

27. **water-plates:** plates with a double bottom for holding hot water.

some pretty green spot, or nook, where a willow, or something, hung so fantastically and invitingly over a stream—was it?—or a rock?—no matter—but the stillness and the repose, after a weary journey 'tis likely, in a languid moment of his lordship's hot restless life, so took his fancy, that he could imagine no place so proper, in the event of his death, to lay his bones in. This was all very natural and excusable as a sentiment, and shows his character in a very pleasing light. But when from a passing sentiment it came to be an act; and when, by a positive testamentary disposal, his remains were actually carried all that way from England; who was there, some desperate sentimentalists excepted, that did not ask the question, Why could not his lordship have found a spot as solitary, a nook as romantic, a tree as green and pendent, with a stream as emblematic to his purpose, in Surrey, in Dorset, or in Devon? Conceive the sentiment boarded up, freighted, entered at the Custom House (startling the tide-waiters with the novelty), hoisted into a ship. Conceive it pawed about and handled between the rude jests of tarpaulin ruffians—a thing of its delicate texture—the salt bilge wetting it till it became as vapid as a damaged lustring. Suppose it in material danger (mariners have some superstition about sentiments) of being tossed over in a fresh gale to some propitiatory shark (spirit of Saint Gothard, save us from a quietus so foreign to the deviser's purpose!) but it has happily evaded a fishy consummation. Trace

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11. **testamentary disposal:** wish expressed in his will.
19. **tide-waiters:** officers of the customs.
21. **tarpaulin ruffians:** rough sailors.
23. **lustring:** a glossy silk fabric.
28. **fishy consummation:** ending by being swallowed by the **propitiatory shark.**

it then to its lucky landing—at Lyons shall we say?—I have not the map before me—jostled upon four men's shoulders—baiting at this town—stopping to refresh at t'other village—waiting a passport here, a license there; the sanction of the magistracy in this district, the concurrence of the ecclesiastics in that canton; till at length it arrives at its destination, tired out and jaded, from a brisk sentiment, into a feature of silly pride or tawdry senseless affectation. How few sentiments, my dear F., I am afraid we can set down, in the sailor's phrase, as quite sea-worthy.

Lastly, as to the agreeable levities, which, though contemptible in bulk, are the twinkling corpuscula which should irradiate a right friendly epistle—your puns and small jests are, I apprehend, extremely circumscribed in their sphere of action. They are so far from a capacity of being packed up and sent beyond sea, they will scarce endure to be transported by hand from this room to the next. Their vigour is as the instant of their birth. Their nutriment for their brief existence is the intellectual atmosphere of the bystanders: or this last, is the fine slime of Nilus—the *melior lutus*,—whose maternal recipiency is as necessary as the *sol pater* to their equivocal generation. A pun hath a hearty kind of present ear-kissing smack with it; you can no more transmit it in its pristine flavour, than you can send a

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13. **corpuscula:** atoms, or cells, like the free corpuscles in the blood.

22. **melior lutus:** better mud.

23. **sol pater:** father sun. The generation of a pun requires two —the one who utters it and the one who hears and appreciates; the one the **sol pater,** the other the **melior lutus.** Cf. "Antony and Cleopatra," II, vii, 29: "Your serpent of Egypt is bred now of your mud by the operation of your sun."

kiss.—Have you not tried in some instances to palm off a yesterday's pun upon a gentleman, and has it answered? Not but it was new to his hearing, but it did not seem to come new from you. It did not hitch in. It was like picking up at a village ale-house a two days old newspaper. You have not seen it before, but you resent the stale thing as an affront. This sort of merchandize above all requires a quick return. A pun, and its recognitory laugh, must be co-instantaneous. The one is the brisk lightning, the other the fierce thunder. A moment's interval, and the link is snapped. A pun is reflected from a friend's face as from a mirror. Who would consult his sweet visnomy, if the polished surface were two or three minutes (not to speak of twelve months, my dear F.) in giving back its copy?

I cannot imagine to myself whereabout you are. When I try to fix it, Peter Wilkins's island comes across me. Sometimes you seem to be in the *Hades* of *Thieves.* I see Diogenes prying among you with his perpetual fruitless lantern. What must you be willing by this time to give for the sight of an honest man! You must almost have forgotten how *we* look. And tell me, what your Sydneyites do? are they th**v*ng all day long? Merciful heaven! what property can stand against such a depredation! The kangaroos—your Aborigines—do they keep their primitive simplicity un-Europe-tainted, with those little short fore-puds, looking like a lesson

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13. **sweet visnomy:** pleasant countenance.

17. **Peter Wilkins's island.** See note on page 250.

25. **Aborigines:** original inhabitants.

27. **fore-puds:** fore-paws. **looking like a lesson framed by nature to the pickpocket:** an object lesson for teaching pocket-picking, on account of the proximity of their fore-paws to the pouches of loose skin in which the females carry their young. (Hallward and Hill.)

framed by nature to the pickpocket! Marry, for diving into fobs they are rather lamely provided *à priori;* but if the hue and cry were once up, they would show as fair a pair of hind-shifters as the expertest loco-motor in the colony.—We hear the most improbable tales at this distance. Pray, is it true that the young Spartans among you are born with six fingers, which spoils their scanning?—It must look very odd; but use reconciles. For their scansion, it is less to be regretted, for if they take it into their heads to be poets, it is odds but they turn out, the greater part of them, vile plagiarists.—Is there much difference to see to between the son of a th**f, and the grandson? or where does the taint stop? Do you bleach in three or in four generations?—I have many questions to put, but ten Delphic voyages can be made in a shorter time than it will take to satisfy my scruples.—Do you grow your own hemp?—What is your staple trade, exclusive of the national profession, I mean? Your lock-smiths, I take it, are some of your great capitalists.

I am insensibly chatting to you as familiarly as when we used to exchange good-morrows out of our old contiguous windows, in pump-famed Hare-court in the Temple. Why did you ever leave that quiet corner?—Why did I?—with its complement of four poor elms, from whose smoke-dried barks, the theme of jesting ruralists, I picked my first lady-birds! My heart is as dry as that spring sometimes proves in a thirsty August,

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2. **à priori:** in front.

11. **plagiarists:** authors who steal the ideas of others.

14. **bleach:** literally, turn white; become respectable.

17. **hemp:** rope for hanging.

18. **national profession:** thieving. Since thieves are so numerous, the **lock-smiths** (19) must drive a thriving trade.

when I revert to the space that is between us; a length of passage enough to render obsolete the phrases of our English letters before they can reach you. But while I talk, I think you hear me,—thoughts dallying with vain surmise—

> Ay me! while thee the seas and sounding shores
> Hold far away.

Come back, before I am grown into a very old man, so as you shall hardly know me. Come, before Bridget walks on crutches. Girls whom you left children have become sage matrons, while you are tarrying there. The blooming Miss W——r (you remember Sally W——r) called upon us yesterday, an aged crone. Folks, whom you knew, die off every year. Formerly, I thought that death was wearing out,—I stood ramparted about with so many healthy friends. The departure of J. W., two springs back, corrected my delusion. Since then the old divorcer has been busy. If you do not make haste to return, there will be little left to greet you, of me, or mine.

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6–7. Cf. Milton's "Lycidas," 153–155.

12. **Sally W——r:** Sally Winter (Lamb's Key). We find no record of who she was.

16. **J. W.:** James, or "Jem" White. See pages 162–165 and note.

## XV. THE PRAISE OF CHIMNEY-SWEEPERS

I LIKE to meet a sweep—understand me—not a grown sweeper—old chimney-sweepers are by no means attractive—but one of those tender novices, blooming through their first nigritude, the maternal washings not quite effaced from the cheek—such as come forth with the dawn, or somewhat earlier, with their little professional notes sounding like the *peep peep* of a young sparrow; or liker to the matin lark should I pronounce them, in their aërial ascents not seldom anticipating the sun-rise?

I have a kindly yearning towards these dim specks—poor blots—innocent blacknesses—

I reverence these young Africans of our own growth—these almost clergy imps, who sport their cloth without assumption; and from their little pulpits (the tops of chimneys), in the nipping air of a December morning, preach a lesson of patience to mankind.

When a child, what a mysterious pleasure it was to witness their operation! to see a chit no bigger than one's self enter, one knew not by what process, into what seemed the *fauces Averni*—to pursue him in imagination, as he went sounding on through so many dark stifling caverns, horrid shades!—to shudder with the

13. **clergy imps:** wearing black, like the churchmen. **cloth:** professional dress. Members of the clergy are often called "men of the cloth."

20. **fauces Averni:** the jaws of hell. Cf. Virgil's "Æneid," VI, 201.

idea that "now, surely, he must be lost for ever!"—to revive at hearing his feeble shout of discovered daylight—and then (O fulness of delight) running out of doors, to come just in time to see the sable phenomenon emerge in safety, the brandished weapon of his art victorious like some flag waved over a conquered citadel! I seem to remember having been told, that a bad sweep was once left in a stack with his brush, to indicate which way the wind blew. It was an awful spectacle certainly; not much unlike the old stage direction in Macbeth, where the "Apparition of child crowned with a tree in his hand rises."

Reader, if thou meetest one of these small gentry in thy early rambles, it is good to give him a penny. It is better to give him twopence. If it be starving weather, and to the proper troubles of his hard occupation, a pair of kibed heels (no unusual accompaniment) be superadded, the demand on thy humanity will surely rise to a tester.

There is a composition, the groundwork of which I have understood to be the sweet wood yclept sassafras. This wood boiled down to a kind of tea, and tempered with an infusion of milk and sugar, hath to some tastes a delicacy beyond the China luxury. I know not how thy palate may relish it; for myself, with every deference to the judicious Mr. Read, who hath time out of mind kept open a shop (the only one he avers in London) for the vending of this "wholesome and pleasant

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10–11. **stage direction in Macbeth**: IV, i, 86.

17. **kibed**: chapped; sore.

19. **tester**: a silver coin of the Tudor period, originally worth eighteen pence, later sixpence.

21. **yclept**: called.

24. **China luxury**: tea.

beverage, on the south side of Fleet Street, as thou approachest Bridge Street—*the only Salopian house*,—I have never yet adventured to dip my own particular lip in a basin of his commended ingredients—a cautious premonition to the olfactories constantly whispering to me, that my stomach must infallibly, with all due courtesy, decline it. Yet I have seen palates, otherwise not uninstructed in dietetical elegances, sup it up with avidity.

I know not by what particular conformation of the organ it happens, but I have always found that this composition is surprisingly gratifying to the palate of a young chimney-sweeper—whether the oily particles (sassafras is slightly oleaginous) do attenuate and soften the fuliginous concretions, which are sometimes found (in dissections) to adhere to the roof of the mouth in these unfledged practitioners; or whether Nature, sensible that she had mingled too much of bitter wood in the lot of these raw victims, caused to grow out of the earth her sassafras for a sweet lenitive—but so it is, that no possible taste or odour to the senses of a young chimney-sweeper can convey a delicate excitement comparable to this mixture. Being penniless, they will yet hang their black heads over the ascending steam, to gratify one sense if possible, seemingly no less pleased than those domestic animals—cats—when they purr over a new-found sprig of valerian. There is some-

5. **premonition to the olfactories:** a warning to the sense of smell.

8. **dietetical elegances:** the more delicate kinds of cookery.

15. **fuliginous concretions:** sooty deposits.

18. **bitter wood:** wormwood, a bitter aromatic herb.

20. **lenitive:** a soother of pain.

27. **valerian:** a pungent herb, whose peculiar odor is highly agreeable to cats.

thing more in these sympathies than philosophy can inculcate.

Now albeit Mr. Read boasteth, not without reason, that his is the *only Salopian house;* yet be it known to thee, reader—if thou art one who keepest what are called good hours, thou art happily ignorant of the fact—he hath a race of industrious imitators, who from stalls, and under open sky, dispense the same savoury mess to humbler customers, at that dead time of the dawn, when (as extremes meet) the rake, reeling home from his midnight cups, and the hard-handed artisan leaving his bed to resume the premature labours of the day, jostle, not unfrequently to the manifest disconcerting of the former, for the honours of the pavement. It is the time when, in summer, between the expired and the not yet relumined kitchen-fires, the kennels of our fair metropolis give forth their least satisfactory odours. The rake, who wisheth to dissipate his o'er-night vapours in more grateful coffee, curses the ungenial fume, as he passeth; but the artisan stops to taste, and blesses the fragrant breakfast.

This is *Saloop*—the precocious herb-woman's darling—the delight of the early gardener, who transports his smoking cabbages by break of day from Hammersmith to Covent Garden's famed piazzas—the delight, and, oh I fear, too often the envy, of the unpennied sweep. Him shouldst thou haply encounter, with his dim visage pendent over the grateful steam, regale him with a

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14. **honours of the pavement:** the privilege of "taking the wall"—walking as far from the dirty curb as possible, in order to avoid the odors of the **kennels,** gutters.

19. **ungenial fume:** the distasteful aroma (of the saloop).

25. **Covent Garden's famed piazzas:** the principal market of **London.**

sumptuous basin (it will cost thee but three half-pennies) and a slice of delicate bread and butter (an added half-penny) so may thy culinary fires, eased of the o'er-charged secretions from thy worse-placed hospitalities, curl up a lighter volume to the welkin—so may the descending soot never taint thy costly well-ingredienced soups—nor the odious cry, quick-reaching from street to street, of the *fired chimney*, invite the rattling engines from ten adjacent parishes, to disturb for a casual scintillation thy peace and pocket!

I am by nature extremely susceptible of street affronts; the jeers and taunts of the populace; the low-bred triumph they display over the casual trip, or splashed stocking, of a gentleman. Yet can I endure the jocularity of a young sweep with something more than forgiveness.—In the last winter but one, pacing along Cheapside with my accustomed precipitation when I walk westward, a treacherous slide brought me upon my back in an instant. I scrambled up with pain and shame enough—yet outwardly trying to face it down, as if nothing had happened—when the roguish grin of one of these young wits encountered me. There he stood, pointing me out with his dusky finger to the mob, and to a poor woman (I suppose his mother) in particular, till the tears for the exquisiteness of the fun (so he thought it) worked themselves out at the corners of his poor red eyes, red from many a previous weeping, and soot-inflamed, yet twinkling through all with such a joy, snatched out of desolation, that Hogarth——but Ho-

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3. **so may thy culinary fires,** etc.: so may your kitchen fires, relieved of the excess soot caused by dinners given your not so deserving friends, rise up more freely to the sky.

9–10. for a **casual scintillation:** because of a chance spark.

29. **Hogarth.** See note on page 246.

garth has got him already (how could he miss him?) in the March to Finchley, grinning at the pie-man—— there he stood, as he stands in the picture, irremovable, as if the jest was to last for ever—with such a maximum of glee, and minimum of mischief, in his mirth—for the grin of a genuine sweep hath absolutely no malice in it —that I could have been content, if the honour of a gentleman might endure it, to have remained his butt and his mockery till midnight.

I am by theory obdurate to the seductiveness of what are called a fine set of teeth. Every pair of rosy lips (the ladies must pardon me) is a casket presumably holding such jewels; but, methinks, they should take leave to "air" them as frugally as possible. The fine lady, or fine gentleman, who show me their teeth, show me bones. Yet must I confess, that from the mouth of a true sweep a display (even to ostentation) of those white and shining ossifications, strikes me as an agreeable anomaly in manners, and an allowable piece of foppery. It is, as when

> A sable cloud
> Turns forth her silver lining on the night.

It is like some remnant of gentry not quite extinct; a badge of better days; a hint of nobility:—and, doubtless, under the obscuring darkness and double night of their forlorn disguisement, oftentimes lurketh good blood, and gentle conditions, derived from lost ancestry, and a lapsed pedigree. The premature apprenticements of these tender victims give but too much encourage-

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13–14. "I beg but leave to air this jewel,"—"Cymbeline," II, iv, 96.

19. **anomaly in manners:** breach of etiquette.

21–22. Cf. Milton's "Comus," 222–224.

ment, I fear, to clandestine, and almost infantile abductions; the seeds of civility and true courtesy, so often discernible in these young grafts (not otherwise to be accounted for) plainly hint at some forced adoptions; many noble Rachels mourning for their children, even in our days, countenance the fact; the tales of fairy-spiriting may shadow a lamentable verity, and the recovery of the young Montagu be but a solitary instance of good fortune, out of many irreparable and hopeless *defiliations.*

In one of the state-beds at Arundel Castle, a few years since—under a ducal canopy—(that seat of the Howards is an object of curiosity to visitors, chiefly for its beds, in which the late duke was especially a connoisseur)—encircled with curtains of delicatest crimson, with starry coronets inwoven—folded between a pair of sheets whiter and softer than the lap where Venus lulled Ascanius—was discovered by chance, after all methods of search had failed, at noonday, fast asleep, a lost chimney-sweeper. The little creature, having somehow confounded his passage among the intricacies of those lordly chimneys, by some unknown aperture had alighted upon this magnificent chamber; and, tired with his tedious explorations, was unable to resist the delicious invitement to repose, which he there saw exhibited; so, creeping between the sheets very quietly, laid his black head upon the pillow, and slept like a young Howard.

Such is the account given to the visitors at the Castle.

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3. **grafts:** like scions grafted on new trees, the sweeps are often stolen from good families to be planted amid harsh conditions.

5. **Rachels.** Cf. Jeremiah, xxxi, 15.

10. **defiliations:** loss of sons.

21. **confounded his passage:** lost his way.

—But I cannot help seeming to perceive a confirmation of what I have just hinted at in this story. A high instinct was at work in the case, or I am mistaken. Is it probable that a poor child of that description, with whatever weariness he might be visited, would have ventured, under such a penalty as he would be taught to expect, to uncover the sheets of a Duke's bed, and deliberately to lay himself down between them, when the rug, or the carpet, presented an obvious couch, still far above his pretensions—is this probable, I would ask, if the great power of nature, which I contend for, had not been manifested within him, prompting to the adventure? Doubtless this young nobleman (for such my mind misgives me that he must be) was allured by some memory, not amounting to full consciousness, of his condition in infancy, when he was used to be lapped by his mother, or his nurse, in just such sheets as he there found, into which he was now but creeping back as into his proper *incunabula*, and resting-place. By no other theory, than by this sentiment of a pre-existent state (as I may call it), can I explain a deed so venturous, and, indeed, upon any other system, so indecorous, in this tender, but unseasonable, sleeper.

My pleasant friend Jem White was so impressed with a belief of metamorphoses like this frequently taking place, that in some sort to reverse the wrongs of fortune in these poor changelings, he instituted an annual feast of chimney-sweepers, at which it was his pleasure to officiate as host and waiter. It was a solemn supper held in Smithfield, upon the yearly return of the fair of St. Bartholomew. Cards were issued a week before to the

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19. **incunabula:** cradle.
25. **metamorphoses:** transformations; changes.

master-sweeps in and about the metropolis, confining the invitation to their younger fry. Now and then an elderly stripling would get in among us, and be good-naturedly winked at; but our main body were infantry. One unfortunate wight, indeed, who, relying upon his dusky suit, had intruded himself into our party, but by tokens was providentially discovered in time to be no chimney-sweeper (all is not soot which looks so), was quoited out of the presence with universal indignation, as not having on the wedding garment; but in general the greatest harmony prevailed. The place chosen was a convenient spot among the pens, at the north side of the fair, not so far distant as to be impervious to the agreeable hubbub of that vanity; but remote enough not to be obvious to the interruption of every gaping spectator in it. The guests assembled about seven. In those little temporary parlours three tables were spread with napery, not so fine as substantial, and at every board a comely hostess presided with her pan of hissing sausages. The nostrils of the young rogues dilated at the savour. James White, as head waiter, had charge of the first table; and myself, with our trusty companion Bigod, ordinarily ministered to the other two. There was

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4. **winked at:** overlooked. **infantry.** Note Lamb's pun.

8. **all is not soot which looks so:** a memory of the proverb, "All that glisters is not gold"—to quote Shakespeare's rendering in "Merchant of Venice," II, vii, 65.

9. **quoited out:** excluded; thrown out like a quoit.

10. **as not having on the wedding garment.** Cf. Matthew, xxii, 11.

12. **pens:** of the Smithfield cattle market.

14. **that vanity:** a memory of Vanity Fair in "Pilgrim's Progress."

18. **napery:** linen.

22. **Bigod.** See essay on "The Two Races of Men."

clamouring and jostling, you may be sure, who should get at the first table—for Rochester in his maddest days could not have done the humours of the scene with more spirit than my friend. After some general expression of thanks for the honour the company had done him, his inaugural ceremony was to clasp the greasy waist of old dame Ursula (the fattest of the three), that stood frying and fretting, half-blessing, half-cursing "the gentleman," and imprint upon her chaste lips a tender salute, whereat the universal host would set up a shout that tore the concave, while hundreds of grinning teeth startled the night with their brightness. O it was a pleasure to see the sable younkers lick in the unctuous meat, with *his* more unctuous sayings—how he would fit the tit-bits to the puny mouths, reserving the lengthier links for the seniors—how he would intercept a morsel even in the jaws of some young desperado, declaring it "must to the pan again to be browned, for it was not fit for a gentleman's eating"—how he would recommend this slice of white bread, or that piece of kissing-crust, to a tender juvenile, advising them all to have a care of cracking their teeth, which were their best patrimony,—how genteelly he would deal about the

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7. **old dame Ursula**: the pig woman in Ben Jonson's "Bartholomew Fair."

10. **whereat the universal host**, etc.: a free paraphrase of "Paradise Lost," I, 541:

> "At which the universal host upsent
> A shout that tore Hell's concave, and beyond
> Frighted the reign of Chaos and old Night."

11. **concave**: the sky.

14. **his more unctuous sayings**: Jem White's more (literally oily) witty sayings.

21. **kissing-crust**: that part of the crust which touches another loaf in the baking—more tender than the top crust.

small ale, as if it were wine, naming the brewer, and protesting, if it were not good, he should lose their custom; with a special recommendation to wipe the lip before drinking. Then we had our toasts—"The King,"—the "Cloth,"—which, whether they understood or not, was equally diverting and flattering;—and for a crowning sentiment, which never failed, "May the Brush supersede the Laurel!" All these, and fifty other fancies, which were rather felt than comprehended by his guests, would he utter, standing upon tables, and prefacing every sentiment with a "Gentlemen, give me leave to propose so and so," which was a prodigious comfort to those young orphans; every now and then stuffing into his mouth (for it did not do to be squeamish on these occasions) indiscriminate pieces of those reeking sausages, which pleased them mightily, and was the savouriest part, you may believe, of the entertainment.

> Golden lads and lasses must,
> As chimney-sweepers, come to dust.—

James White is extinct, and with him these suppers have long ceased. He carried away with him half the fun of the world when he died—of my world at least. His old clients look for him among the pens; and, missing him, reproach the altered feast of St. Bartholomew, and the glory of Smithfield departed for ever.

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7–8. **"May the Brush supersede the Laurel!"**: May the brush of the sweep surpass in honor the laurel wreath of war-victories.

18–19. Cf. "Cymbeline," IV, ii, 262–263.

## XVI. A DISSERTATION UPON ROAST PIG

Mankind, says a Chinese manuscript, which my friend M. was obliging enough to read and explain to me, for the first seventy thousand ages ate their meat raw, clawing or biting it from the living animal, just as they do in Abyssinia to this day. This period is not obscurely hinted at by their great Confucius in the second chapter of his Mundane Mutations, where he designates a kind of golden age by the term Cho-fang, literally the Cooks' holiday. The manuscript goes on to say, that the art of roasting, or rather broiling (which I take to be the elder brother) was accidentally discovered in the manner following. The swine-herd, Ho-ti, having gone out into the woods one morning, as his manner was, to collect mast for his hogs, left his cottage in the care of his eldest son Bo-bo, a great lubberly boy, who being fond of playing with fire, as younkers of his age commonly are, let some sparks escape into a bundle of straw, which kindling quickly, spread the conflagration over every part of their poor mansion, till it was reduced to ashes. Together with the cottage (a sorry antediluvian makeshift of a building, you may think it), what was of much more importance, a fine litter of new-farrowed pigs, no less than nine in number, perished. China pigs have been esteemed a luxury all over the East from the

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14. **mast:** acorns, beechnuts, etc.
22. **new-farrowed:** just born.

remotest periods that we read of. Bo-bo was in the utmost consternation, as you may think, not so much for the sake of the tenement, which his father and he could easily build up again with a few dry branches, and the labour of an hour or two, at any time, as for the loss of the pigs. While he was thinking what he should say to his father, and wringing his hands over the smoking remnants of one of those untimely sufferers, an odour assailed his nostrils, unlike any scent which he had before experienced. What could it proceed from?—not from the burnt cottage—he had smelt that smell before —indeed this was by no means the first accident of the kind which had occurred through the negligence of this unlucky young firebrand. Much less did it resemble that of any known herb, weed, or flower. A premonitory moistening at the same time overflowed his nether lip. He knew not what to think. He next stooped down to feel the pig, if there were any signs of life in it. He burnt his fingers, and to cool them he applied them in his booby fashion to his mouth. Some of the crumbs of the scorched skin had come away with his fingers, and for the first time in his life (in the world's life indeed, for before him no man had known it) he tasted—*crackling!* Again he felt and fumbled at the pig. It did not burn him so much now, still he licked his fingers from a sort of habit. The truth at length broke into his slow understanding, that it was the pig that smelt so, and the pig that tasted so delicious; and, surrendering himself up to the new-born pleasure, he fell to tearing up whole handfuls of the scorched skin with the flesh next it, and was cramming it down his throat in his beastly fashion,

15–16. **A premonitory moistening,** etc.: as we should say, "His mouth watered in anticipation."

23–24. **crackling:** the outer skin done to a crisp brown.

when his sire entered amid the smoking rafters, armed with retributory cudgel, and finding how affairs stood, began to rain blows upon the young rogue's shoulders, as thick as hail-stones, which Bo-bo heeded not any more than if they had been flies. The tickling pleasure, which he experienced in his lower regions, had rendered him quite callous to any inconveniences he might feel in those remote quarters. His father might lay on, but he could not beat him from his pig, till he had fairly made an end of it, when, becoming a little more sensible of his situation, something like the following dialogue ensued.

"You graceless whelp, what have you got there devouring? Is it not enough that you have burnt me down three houses with your dog's tricks, and be hanged to you, but you must be eating fire, and I know not what —what have you got there, I say?"

"O father, the pig, the pig, do come and taste how nice the burnt pig eats."

The ears of Ho-ti tingled with horror. He cursed his son, and he cursed himself that ever he should beget a son that should eat burnt pig.

Bo-bo, whose scent was wonderfully sharpened since morning, soon raked out another pig, and fairly rending it asunder, thrust the lesser half by main force into the fists of Ho-ti, still shouting out, "Eat, eat, eat the burnt pig, father, only taste,—O Lord,"—with such-like barbarous ejaculations, cramming all the while as if he would choke.

Ho-ti trembled every joint while he grasped the abominable thing, wavering whether he should not put his son to death for an unnatural young monster, when the crackling scorching his fingers, as it had done his son's, and applying the same remedy to them, he in his turn tasted some of its flavour, which, make what sour mouths

he would for a pretence, proved not altogether displeasing to him. In conclusion (for the manuscript here is a little tedious) both father and son fairly sat down to the mess, and never left off till they had despatched all that remained of the litter.

Bo-bo was strictly enjoined not to let the secret escape, for the neighbours would certainly have stoned them for a couple of abominable wretches, who could think of improving upon the good meat which God had sent them. Nevertheless, strange stories got about. It was observed that Ho-ti's cottage was burnt down now more frequently than ever. Nothing but fires from this time forward. Some would break out in broad day, others in the night time. As often as the sow farrowed, so sure was the house of Ho-ti to be in a blaze; and Ho-ti himself, which was the more remarkable, instead of chastising his son, seemed to grow more indulgent to him than ever. At length they were watched, the terrible mystery discovered, and father and son summoned to take their trial at Pekin, then an inconsiderable assize town. Evidence was given, the obnoxious food itself produced in court, and verdict about to be pronounced, when the foreman of the jury begged that some of the burnt pig, of which the culprits stood accused, might be handed into the box. He handled it, and they all handled it, and burning their fingers, as Bo-bo and his father had done before them, and nature prompting to each of them the same remedy, against the face of all the facts, and the clearest charge which judge had ever given,—to the surprise of the whole court, townsfolk, strangers, reporters, and all present—without leaving the box, or any manner of consultation whatever, they brought in a simultaneous verdict of Not Guilty.

The judge, who was a shrewd fellow, winked at the manifest iniquity of the decision; and, when the court was dismissed, went privily, and bought up all the pigs that could be had for love or money. In a few days his Lordship's town house was observed to be on fire. The thing took wing, and now there was nothing to be seen but fires in every direction. Fuel and pigs grew enormously dear all over the district. The insurance offices one and all shut up shop. People built slighter and slighter every day, until it was feared that the very science of architecture would in no long time be lost to the world. Thus this custom of firing houses continued, till in process of time, says my manuscript, a sage arose, like our Locke, who made a discovery, that the flesh of swine, or indeed of any other animal, might be cooked (*burnt*, as they called it) without the necessity of consuming a whole house to dress it. Then first began the rude form of a gridiron. Roasting by the string, or spit, came in a century or two later, I forget in whose dynasty. By such slow degrees, concludes the manuscript, do the most useful, and seemingly the most obvious arts, make their way among mankind.——

Without placing too implicit faith in the account above given, it must be agreed, that if a worthy pretext for so dangerous an experiment as setting houses on fire (especially in these days) could be assigned in favour of any culinary object, that pretext and excuse might be found in ROAST PIG.

Of all the delicacies in the whole *mundus edibilis*, I will maintain it to be the most delicate—*princeps obsoniorum*.

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1. **winked at:** purposely overlooked.
14. **Locke.** See note on page 250.
29. **mundus edibilis:** world of food.
30. **princeps obsoniorum:** chief of the dainties.

I speak not of your grown porkers—things between pig and pork—those hobbydehoys—but a young and tender suckling—under a moon old—guiltless as yet of the sty—with no original speck of the *amor immunditiæ*, the hereditary failing of the first parent, yet manifest—his voice as yet not broken, but something between a childish treble, and a grumble—the mild forerunner, or *præludium*, of a grunt.

*He must be roasted.* I am not ignorant that our ancestors ate them seethed, or boiled—but what a sacrifice of the exterior tegument!

There is no flavour comparable, I will contend, to that of the crisp, tawny, well-watched, not over-roasted, *crackling*, as it is well called—the very teeth are invited to their share of the pleasure at this banquet in overcoming the coy, brittle resistance—with the adhesive oleaginous—O call it not fat—but an indefinable sweetness growing up to it—the tender blossoming of fat—fat cropped in the bud—taken in the shoot—in the first innocence—the cream and quintessence of the child-pig's yet pure food—the lean, no lean, but a kind of animal manna,—or, rather, fat and lean (if it must be so) so blended and running into each other, that both together make but one ambrosian result, or common substance.

Behold him, while he is "doing"—it seemeth rather a refreshing warmth, than a scorching heat, that he is

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2. **hobbydehoys:** lubberly ones, at the awkward age between young pigs and grown porkers.

4–5. **amor immunditiæ:** love of filth.

8. **præludium:** prelude.

11. **exterior tegument:** the outer skin—the "crackling."

24. **ambrosian:** like ambrosia, the food of the gods in Greek mythology.

so passive to. How equably he twirleth round the string!—Now he is just done. To see the extreme sensibility of that tender age, he hath wept out his pretty eyes—radiant jellies—shooting stars—

See him in the dish, his second cradle, how meek he lieth!—wouldst thou have had this innocent grow up to the grossness and indocility which too often accompany maturer swinehood? Ten to one he would have proved a glutton, a sloven, an obstinate, disagreeable animal—wallowing in all manner of filthy conversation—from these sins he is happily snatched away—

> Ere sin could blight, or sorrow fade,
> Death came with timely care—

his memory is odoriferous—no clown curseth, while his stomach half rejecteth, the rank bacon—no coalheaver bolteth him in reeking sausages—he hath a fair sepulchre in the grateful stomach of the judicious epicure—and for such a tomb might be content to die.

He is the best of sapors. Pine-apple is great. She is indeed almost too transcendent—a delight, if not sinful, yet so like to sinning, that really a tender-conscienced person would do well to pause—too ravishing for mortal taste, she woundeth and excoriateth the lips that approach her—like lovers' kisses, she biteth—she is a pleasure bordering on pain from the fierceness and insanity of her relish—but she stoppeth at the palate—she meddleth not with the appetite—and the coarsest hunger might barter her consistently for a mutton chop.

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10. **conversation**: behavior. See II Peter, ii, 7.

12–13. Quoted from Coleridge's "Epitaph on an Infant." Try to imagine Coleridge's feeling at being quoted in this connection.

19. **sapors**: flavors.

Pig—let me speak his praise—is no less provocative of the appetite, than he is satisfactory to the criticalness of the censorious palate. The strong man may batten on him, and the weakling refuseth not his mild juices.

Unlike to mankind's mixed characters, a bundle of virtues and vices, inexplicably intertwisted, and not to be unravelled without hazard, he is—good throughout. No part of him is better or worse than another. He helpeth, as far as his little means extend, all around. He is the least envious of banquets. He is all neighbours' fare.

I am one of those, who freely and ungrudgingly impart a share of the good things of this life which fall to their lot (few as mine are in this kind) to a friend. I protest I take as great an interest in my friend's pleasures, his relishes, and proper satisfactions, as in mine own. "Presents," I often say, "endear Absents." Hares, pheasants, partridges, snipes, barn-door chickens (those "tame villatic fowl"), capons, plovers, brawn, barrels of oysters, I dispense as freely as I receive them. I love to taste them, as it were, upon the tongue of my friend. But a stop must be put somewhere. One would not, like Lear, "give everything." I make my stand upon pig. Methinks it is an ingratitude to the Giver of all good flavours, to extra-domiciliate, or send out of the house, slightingly, (under pretext of friendship, or I know not what), a blessing so particularly adapted,

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3. **censorious palate:** critical taste.

8–9. **He helpeth . . . all around:** there is enough of him so that each may receive a portion.

19. **"tame villatic fowl."** From Milton's "Samson Agonistes." **villatic** means rural, **capons,** fowls, and **brawn,** pigs, fattened for the table.

23. **"give everything."** Cf. "King Lear," II, iv, 246.

predestined, I may say, to my individual palate—It argues an insensibility.

I remember a touch of conscience in this kind at school. My good old aunt, who never parted from me at the end of a holiday without stuffing a sweetmeat, or some nice thing, into my pocket, had dismissed me one evening with a smoking plum-cake, fresh from the oven. In my way to school (it was over London Bridge) a grey-headed old beggar saluted me (I have no doubt at this time of day that he was a counterfeit). I had no pence to console him with, and in the vanity of self-denial, and the very coxcombry of charity, schoolboy-like, I made him a present of—the whole cake! I walked on a little, buoyed up, as one is on such occasions, with a sweet soothing of self-satisfaction; but before I had got to the end of the bridge, my better feelings returned, and I burst into tears, thinking how ungrateful I had been to my good aunt, to go and give her good gift away to a stranger, that I had never seen before, and who might be a bad man for aught I knew; and then I thought of the pleasure my aunt would be taking in thinking that I — I myself, and not another — would eat her nice cake — and what should I say to her the next time I saw her—how naughty I was to part with her pretty present—and the odour of that spicy cake came back upon my recollection, and the pleasure and the curiosity I had taken in seeing her make

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8. **(it was over London Bridge):** another of Lamb's deliberate misstatements. Christ's Hospital was on the north side of the Thames.

9–10. **at this time of day:** at this late date—wise as I am now.

11–12. **vanity of self-denial,** etc.: giving, not for the sake of relieving suffering, but for the prudish feeling of comfortable self-satisfaction that would follow.

it, and her joy when she sent it to the oven, and how disappointed she would feel that I had never had a bit of it in my mouth at last—and I blamed my impertinent spirit of alms-giving, and out-of-place hypocrisy of goodness, and above all I wished never to see the face again of that insidious, good-for-nothing, old grey impostor.

Our ancestors were nice in their method of sacrificing these tender victims. We read of pigs whipt to death with something of a shock, as we hear of any other obsolete custom. The age of discipline is gone by, or it would be curious to inquire (in a philosophical light merely) what effect this process might have towards intenerating and dulcifying a substance, naturally so mild and dulcet as the flesh of young pigs. It looks like refining a violet. Yet we should be cautious, while we condemn the inhumanity, how we censure the wisdom of the practice. It might impart a gusto—

I remember an hypothesis, argued upon by the young students, when I was at St. Omer's, and maintained with much learning and pleasantry on both sides, "Whether, supposing that the flavour of a pig who obtained his death by whipping (*per flagellationem extremam*) superadded a pleasure upon the palate of a man more intense than any possible suffering we can conceive in the animal, is man justified in using that method of putting the animal to death?" I forget the decision.

His sauce should be considered. Decidedly, a few bread crumbs, done up with his liver and brains, and a dash of mild sage. But, banish, dear Mrs. Cook, I be-

8. **nice**: the word is here used in its proper sense.

13–14. **intenerating and dulcifying**: making tender and sweet.

23–24. **per flagellationem extremam**: by whipping to death.

seech you, the whole onion tribe. Barbecue your whole hogs to your palate, steep them in shalots, stuff them out with plantations of the rank and guilty garlic; you cannot poison them, or make them stronger than they are—but consider, he is a weakling—a flower.

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1. **Barbecue:** roast whole.
2. **shalots:** a vegetable akin to garlic, used for seasoning.

## XVII. A BACHELOR'S COMPLAINT OF THE BEHAVIOUR OF MARRIED PEOPLE

As a single man, I have spent a good deal of my time in noting down the infirmities of Married People, to console myself for those superior pleasures, which they tell me I have lost by remaining as I am.

I cannot say that the quarrels of men and their wives ever made any great impression upon me, or had much tendency to strengthen me in those anti-social resolutions, which I took up long ago upon more substantial considerations. What oftenest offends me at the houses of married persons where I visit, is an error of quite a different description;—it is that they are too loving.

Not too loving neither: that does not explain my meaning. Besides, why should that offend me? The very act of separating themselves from the rest of the world, to have the fuller enjoyment of each other's society, implies that they prefer one another to all the world.

But what I complain of is, that they carry this preference so undisguisedly, they perk it up in the faces of us single people so shamelessly, you cannot be in their company a moment without being made to feel, by some indirect hint or open avowal, that *you* are not the object of this preference. Now there are some things which give no offence, while implied or taken for granted merely; but expressed, there is much offence in them. If a man were to accost the first homely-featured or

plain-dressed young woman of his acquaintance, and tell her bluntly, that she was not handsome or rich enough for him, and he could not marry her, he would deserve to be kicked for his ill manners; yet no less is implied in the fact, that having access and opportunity of putting the question to her, he has never yet thought fit to do it. The young woman understands this as clearly as if it were put into words; but no reasonable young woman would think of making this the ground of a quarrel. Just as little right have a married couple to tell me by speeches, and looks that are scarce less plain than speeches, that I am not the happy man,—the lady's choice. It is enough that I know I am not: I do not want this perpetual reminding.

The display of superior knowledge or riches may be made sufficiently mortifying; but these admit of a palliative. The knowledge which is brought out to insult me, may accidentally improve me; and in the rich man's houses and pictures,—his parks and gardens, I have a temporary usufruct at least. But the display of married happiness has none of these palliatives: it is throughout pure, unrecompensed, unqualified insult.

Marriage by its best title is a monopoly, and not of the least invidious sort. It is the cunning of most possessors of any exclusive privilege to keep their advantage as much out of sight as possible, that their less favoured neighbours, seeing little of the benefit, may the less be disposed to question the right. But these married monopolists thrust the most obnoxious part of their patent into our faces.

Nothing is to me more distasteful than that entire

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16–17. **palliative:** remedy; extenuating circumstance.

20. **usufruct:** right of enjoying things belonging to another.

complacency and satisfaction which beam in the countenances of a new-married couple,—in that of the lady particularly: it tells you, that her lot is disposed of in this world; that *you* can have no hopes of her. It is true, I have none; nor wishes either, perhaps: but this is one of those truths which ought, as I said before, to be taken for granted, not expressed.

The excessive airs which those people give themselves, founded on the ignorance of us unmarried people, would be more offensive if they were less irrational. We will allow them to understand the mysteries belonging to their own craft better than we who have not had the happiness to be made free of the company: but their arrogance is not content within these limits. If a single person presume to offer his opinion in their presence, though upon the most indifferent subject, he is immediately silenced as an incompetent person. Nay, a young married lady of my acquaintance, who, the best of the jest was, had not changed her condition above a fortnight before, in a question on which I had the misfortune to differ from her, respecting the properest mode of breeding oysters for the London market, had the assurance to ask with a sneer, how such an old Bachelor as I could pretend to know any thing about such matters.

But what I have spoken of hitherto is nothing to the airs which these creatures give themselves when they come, as they generally do, to have children. When I consider how little of a rarity children are,—that every street and blind alley swarms with them,—that the poorest people commonly have them in most abundance,—that there are few marriages that are not blest with at least one of these bargains,—how often they turn out ill, and defeat the fond hopes of their parents, taking

to vicious courses, which end in poverty, disgrace, the gallows, &c.—I cannot for my life tell what cause for pride there can possibly be in having them. If they were young phœnixes, indeed, that were born but one in a year, there might be a pretext. But when they are so common——

I do not advert to the insolent merit which they assume with their husbands on these occasions. Let them look to that. But why *we*, who are not their natural-born subjects, should be expected to bring our spices, myrrh, and incense,—our tribute and homage of admiration,—I do not see.

"Like as the arrows in the hand of the giant, even so are the young children:" so says the excellent office in our Prayer-book appointed for the churching of women. "Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them:" So say I; but then don't let him discharge his quiver upon us that are weaponless;—let them be arrows, but not to gall and stick us. I have generally observed that these arrows are double-headed: they have two forks, to be sure to hit with one or the other. As for instance, where you come into a house which is full of children, if you happen to take no notice of them (you are thinking of something else, perhaps, and turn a deaf ear to their innocent caresses), you are set down as untractable, morose, a hater of children. On the other hand, if you find them more than usually engaging,—if you are taken with their pretty manners, and set about in earnest to romp and play with them, some pretext or other is sure to be found for sending them out of the

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10–11. Cf. Matthew, ii. 11.

13–16. **Like arrows . . . Happy is the man,** etc. Cf. Psalms, cxxvii, 4–5. **churching of women:** the service of thanksgiving over a woman's recovery after child-birth.

room: they are too noisy or boisterous, or Mr. —— does not like children. With one or other of these forks the arrow is sure to hit you.

I could forgive their jealousy, and dispense with toying with their brats, if it gives them any pain; but I think it unreasonable to be called upon to *love* them, where I see no occasion,—to love a whole family, perhaps, eight, nine, or ten, indiscriminately,—to love all the pretty dears, because children are so engaging.

I know there is a proverb, "Love me, love my dog;" that is not always so very practicable, particularly if the dog be set upon you to tease you or snap at you in sport. But a dog, or a lesser thing,—any inanimate substance, as a keepsake, a watch or a ring, a tree, or the place where we last parted when my friend went away upon a long absence, I can make shift to love, because I love him, and anything that reminds me of him; provided it be in its nature indifferent, and apt to receive whatever hue fancy can give it. But children have a real character and an essential being of themselves: they are amiable or unamiable *per se;* I must love or hate them as I see cause for either in their qualities. A child's nature is too serious a thing to admit of its being regarded as a mere appendage to another being, and to be loved or hated accordingly: they stand with me upon their own stock, as much as men and women do. O! but you will say, sure it is an attractive age,—there is something in the tender years of infancy that of itself

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11. **"Love me, love my dog."** Lamb humorously treats this old proverb in "Popular Fallacies," in the second series of the "Essays of Elia."

22. **per se:** of themselves, according to their own individualities.

charms us. That is the very reason why I am more nice about them. I know that a sweet child is the sweetest thing in nature, not even excepting the delicate creatures which bear them; but the prettier the kind of a thing is, the more desirable it is that it should be pretty of its kind. One daisy differs not much from another in glory; but a violet should look and smell the daintiest. —I was always rather squeamish in my women and children.

But this is not the worst: one must be admitted into their familiarity at least, before they can complain of inattention. It implies visits, and some kind of intercourse. But if the husband be a man with whom you have lived on a friendly footing before marriage,—if you did not come in on the wife's side,—if you did not sneak into the house in her train, but were an old friend in fast habits of intimacy before their courtship was so much as thought on,—look about you—your tenure is precarious—before a twelvemonth shall roll over your head, you shall find your old friend gradually grow cool and altered towards you, and at last seek opportunities of breaking with you. I have scarce a married friend of my acquaintance, upon whose firm faith I can rely, whose friendship did not commence *after the period of his marriage.* With some limitations they can endure that: but that the good man should have dared to enter into a solemn league of friendship in which they were not consulted, though it happened before they knew him, —before they that are now man and wife ever met,—

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1. **nice:** again not in the colloquial sense, but here meaning fastidious.

6–7. **One daisy differs not much from another in glory:** a memory of I Corinthians, xv, 41.

8. **squeamish:** particular.

this is intolerable to them. Every long friendship, every old authentic intimacy, must be brought into their office to be new stamped with their currency, as a sovereign Prince calls in the good old money that was coined in some reign before he was born or thought of, to be new marked and minted with the stamp of his authority, before he will let it pass current in the world. You may guess what luck generally befalls such a rusty piece of metal as I am in these *new mintings.*

Innumerable are the ways which they take to insult and worm you out of their husband's confidence. Laughing at all you say with a kind of wonder, as if you were a queer kind of fellow that said good things, *but an oddity,* is one of the ways;—they have a particular kind of stare for the purpose;—till at last the husband, who used to defer to your judgment, and would pass over some excrescences of understanding and manner for the sake of a general vein of observation (not quite vulgar) which he perceived in you, begins to suspect whether you are not altogether a humourist,— a fellow well enough to have consorted with in his bachelor days, but not quite so proper to be introduced to ladies. This may be called the staring way; and is that which has oftenest been put in practice against me.

Then there is the exaggerating way, or the way of irony: that is, where they find you an object of especial regard with their husband, who is not so easily to be shaken from the lasting attachment founded on esteem which he has conceived towards you; by never-qualified exaggerations to cry up all that you say or do, till the

17. **excrescences:** disfiguring outgrowths, like warts on the human body or fungi on trees. Here "peculiar outcroppings of learning"—well said of Lamb.

20. **humourist.** See note on page 245.

good man, who understands well enough that it is all done in compliment to him, grows weary of the debt of gratitude which is due to so much candour, and by relaxing a little on his part, and taking down a peg or two in his enthusiasm, sinks at length to that kindly level of moderate esteem,—that "decent affection and complacent kindness" towards you, where she herself can join in sympathy with him without much stretch and violence to her sincerity.

Another way (for the ways they have to accomplish so desirable a purpose are infinite) is, with a kind of innocent simplicity, continually to mistake what it was which first made their husband fond of you. If an esteem for something excellent in your moral character was that which riveted the chain which she is to break, upon any imaginary discovery of a want of poignancy in your conversation, she will cry, "I thought, my dear, you described your friend, Mr. ——, as a great wit." If, on the other hand, it was for some supposed charm in your conversation that he first grew to like you, and was content for this to overlook some trifling irregularities in your moral deportment, upon the first notice of any of these she as readily exclaims, "This, my dear, is your good Mr. ——." One good lady whom I took the liberty of expostulating with for not showing me quite so much respect as I thought due to her husband's old friend, had the candour to confess to me that she had often heard Mr. —— speak of me before marriage, and that she had conceived a great desire to be acquainted with me, but that the sight of me had very much disappointed her expectations; for from her hus-

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6–7. "decent affection and complacent kindness": from "Douglas," a tragedy by J. Home (1757), I, i.

band's representations of me, she had formed a notion that she was to see a fine, tall, officer-like looking man (I use her very words); the very reverse of which proved to be the truth. This was candid; and I had the civility not to ask her in return, how she came to pitch upon a standard of personal accomplishments for her husband's friends which differed so much from his own; for my friend's dimensions as near as possible approximate to mine; he standing five feet five in his shoes, in which I have the advantage of him by about half an inch; and he no more than myself exhibiting any indications of a martial character in his air or countenance.

These are some of the mortifications which I have encountered in the absurd attempt to visit at their houses. To enumerate them all would be a vain endeavour: I shall therefore just glance at the very common impropriety of which married ladies are guilty,—of treating us as if we were their husbands, and *vice versâ*. I mean, when they use us with familiarity, and their husbands with ceremony. *Testacea*, for instance, kept me the other night two or three hours beyond my usual time of supping, while she was fretting because Mr. —— did not come home, till the oysters were all spoiled, rather than she would be guilty of the impoliteness of touching one in his absence. This was reversing the point of good manners: for ceremony is an invention to take off the uneasy feeling which we derive from knowing ourselves to be less the object of love and esteem with a fellow-creature than some other person is. It endeavours to make up, by superior attentions in little points, for that

20. **Testacea**: "shell-fish," with a feminine ending for the hostess. Lamb imitates from the "Spectator" this concealing of identity under a classical name. Here the name is one of Lamb's own creation, whose appositeness is clear.

invidious preference which it is forced to deny in the greater. Had *Testacea* kept the oysters back for me, and withstood her husband's importunities to go to supper, she would have acted according to the strict rules of propriety. I know no ceremony that ladies are bound to observe to their husbands, beyond the point of a modest behaviour and decorum: therefore I must protest against the vicarious gluttony of *Cerasia*, who at her own table sent away a dish of Morellas, which I was applying to with great good will, to her husband at the other end of the table, and recommended a plate of less extraordinary gooseberries to my unwedded palate in their stead. Neither can I excuse the wanton affront of ——.

But I am weary of stringing up all my married acquaintance by Roman denominations. Let them amend and change their manners, or I promise to record the full-length English of their names, to the terror of all such desperate offenders in future.

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8. **Cerasia**: same as above, "Cherry."
9. **Morellas** are a kind of cherry.
16. **Roman denominations**: by names made up from the Latin.

## XVIII. MODERN GALLANTRY

In comparing modern with ancient manners, we are pleased to compliment ourselves upon the point of gallantry; a certain obsequiousness, or deferential respect, which we are supposed to pay to females, as females.

I shall believe that this principle actuates our conduct, when I can forget, that in the nineteenth century of the era from which we date our civility, we are but just beginning to leave off the very frequent practice of whipping females in public, in common with the coarsest male offenders.

I shall believe it to be influential, when I can shut my eyes to the fact, that in England women are still occasionally—hanged.

I shall believe in it, when actresses are no longer subject to be hissed off a stage by gentlemen.

I shall believe in it, when Dorimant hands a fish-wife across the kennel; or assists the apple-woman to pick up her wandering fruit, which some unlucky dray has just dissipated.

I shall believe in it, when the Dorimants in humbler life, who would be thought in their way notable adepts in this refinement, shall act upon it in places where they are not known, or think themselves not observed—when

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17. **Dorimant:** a libertine who prides himself on his gentility; a character in Etherege's "The Man of Mode" (1676).

18. **kennel.** See footnote on page 158, line 14.

I shall see the traveller for some rich tradesman part with his admired box-coat, to spread it over the defenceless shoulders of the poor woman, who is passing to her parish on the roof of the same stage-coach with him, drenched in the rain—when I shall no longer see a woman standing up in the pit of a London theatre, till she is sick and faint with the exertion, with men about her, seated at their ease, and jeering at her distress; till one, that seems to have more manners or conscience than the rest, significantly declares "she should be welcome to his seat, if she were a little younger and handsomer." Place this dapper warehouseman, or that rider, in a circle of their own female acquaintance, and you shall confess you have not seen a politer-bred man in Lothbury.

Lastly, I shall begin to believe that there is some such principle influencing our conduct, when more than one-half of the drudgery and coarse servitude of the world shall cease to be performed by women.

Until that day comes, I shall never believe this boasted point to be anything more than a conventional fiction; a pageant got up between the sexes, in a certain rank, and at a certain time of life, in which both find their account equally.

I shall be even disposed to rank it among the salutary fictions of life, when in polite circles I shall see the same attentions paid to age as to youth, to homely features

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2. **box-coat**: a greatcoat worn by travellers on the boxes of stage-coaches.

15. **Lothbury**: a London street, where may be seen many business men—men of the class Lamb has been describing in lines 12–13.

22. **pageant**: a show; display.

23. **find their account**: profit.

as to handsome, to coarse complexions as to clear—to the woman, as she is a woman, not as she is a beauty, a fortune, or a title.

I shall believe it to be something more than a name, when a well-dressed gentleman in a well-dressed company can advert to the topic of *female old age* without exciting, and intending to excite, a sneer:—when the phrases "antiquated virginity," and such a one has "overstood her market," pronounced in good company, shall raise immediate offence in man, or woman, that shall hear them spoken.

Joseph Paice, of Bread Street Hill, merchant, and one of the Directors of the South-Sea Company—the same to whom Edwards, the Shakespeare commentator, has addressed a fine sonnet—was the only pattern of consistent gallantry I have met with. He took me under his shelter at an early age, and bestowed some pains upon me. I owe to his precepts and example whatever there is of the man of business (and that is not much) in my composition. It was not his fault that I did not profit more. Though bred a Presbyterian, and brought up a merchant, he was the finest gentleman of his time. He had not *one* system of attention to females in the drawing-room, and *another* in the shop, or at the stall. I do not mean that he made no distinction. But he

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8. **"antiquated virginity"**: a phrase in Johnson's *Rambler*, No. 39.

9. **"overstood her market"**: has become shop-worn; has not moved off in the matrimonial market as have the more attractive women.

14. **Edwards,** Thomas: an uncle of Paice; a critic of repute, but a mediocre poet, says Ainger.

24. **the stall:** street or market booths where vegetables, fruits, and the like are exposed for sale.

never lost sight of sex, or overlooked it in the casualties of a disadvantageous situation. I have seen him stand bare-headed—smile if you please—to a poor servant girl, while she has been inquiring of him the way to some street—in such a posture of unforced civility, as neither to embarrass her in the acceptance, nor himself in the offer, of it. He was no dangler, in the common acceptation of the word, after women: but he reverenced and upheld, in every form in which it came before him, *womanhood.* I have seen him—nay, smile not—tenderly escorting a market-woman, whom he had encountered in a shower, exalting his umbrella over her poor basket of fruit, that it might receive no damage, with as much carefulness as if she had been a Countess. To the reverend form of Female Eld he would yield the wall (though it were to an ancient beggar-woman) with more ceremony than we can afford to show our grandams. He was the Preux Chevalier of Age; the Sir Calidore, or Sir Tristan, to those who have no Calidores or Tristans to defend them. The roses, that had long faded thence, still bloomed for him in those withered and yellow cheeks.

He was never married, but in his youth he paid his addresses to the beautiful Susan Winstanley—old Winstanley's daughter of Clapton—who dying in the early days of their courtship, confirmed in him the resolution

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1–2. **casualties of a disadvantageous situation:** the accidents of fortune in placing one in a humble position in life.

15. **Female Eld:** female old age. **yield the wall.** Cf. footnote on page 158, line 14.

18. **Preux Chevalier:** valiant knight.

24. **Susan Winstanley.** Miss Anne Manning's "Family Pictures" (1860) fills out the portrait of Miss Winstanley here presented.

of perpetual bachelorship. It was during their short courtship, he told me, that he had been one day treating his mistress with a profusion of civil speeches—the common gallantries—to which kind of thing she had hitherto manifested no repugnance—but in this instance with no effect. He could not obtain from her a decent acknowledgment in return. She rather seemed to resent his compliments. He could not set it down to caprice, for the lady had always shown herself above that littleness. When he ventured on the following day, finding her a little better humoured, to expostulate with her on her coldness of yesterday, she confessed, with her usual frankness, that she had no sort of dislike to his attentions; that she could even endure some high-flown compliments; that a young woman placed in her situation had a right to expect all sort of civil things said to her; that she hoped she could digest a dose of adulation, short of insincerity, with as little injury to her humility as most young women: but that—a little before he had commenced his compliments—she had overheard him by accident, in rather rough language, rating a young woman, who had not brought home his cravats quite to the appointed time, and she thought to herself, "As I am Miss Susan Winstanley, and a young lady—a reputed beauty, and known to be a fortune,—I can have my choice of the finest speeches from the mouth of this very fine gentleman who is courting me—but if I had been poor Mary Such-a-one (*naming the milliner*),—and had failed of bringing home the cravats to the appointed hour—though perhaps I had sat up half the night to forward them—what sort of compliments

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17. **digest a dose of adulation:** "swallow a compliment," as we should say.

should I have received then?—And my woman's pride came to my assistance; and I thought, that if it were only to do *me* honour, a female, like myself, might have received handsomer usage: and I was determined not to accept any fine speeches, to the compromise of that sex, the belonging to which was after all my strongest claim and title to them."

I think the lady discovered both generosity, and a just way of thinking, in this rebuke which she gave her lover; and I have sometimes imagined, that the uncommon strain of courtesy, which through life regulated the actions and behaviour of my friend towards all of womankind indiscriminately, owed its happy origin to this seasonable lesson from the lips of his lamented mistress.

I wish the whole female world would entertain the same notion of these things that Miss Winstanley showed. Then we should see something of the spirit of consistent gallantry; and no longer witness the anomaly of the same man—a pattern of true politeness to a wife—of cold contempt, or rudeness, to a sister—the idolater of his female mistress—the disparager and despiser of his no less female aunt, or unfortunate—still female—maiden cousin. Just so much respect as a woman derogates from her own sex, in whatever condition placed—her handmaid, or dependent—she deserves to have diminished from herself on that score; and probably will feel the diminution, when youth, and beauty, and advantages, not inseparable from sex, shall lose of their attraction. What a woman should demand of a man in courtship, or after it, is first—respect for

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8. **discovered:** in the old meaning of the word ,to uncover, to reveal.

25. **derogates:** takes away from.

her as she is a woman;—and next to that—to be respected by him above all other women. But let her stand upon her female character as upon a foundation; and let the attentions, incident to individual preference, be so many pretty additaments and ornaments—as many, and as fanciful, as you please—to that main structure. Let her first lesson be—with sweet Susan Winstanley—to *reverence her sex.*

## XIX. OLD CHINA

I HAVE an almost feminine partiality for old china. When I go to see any great house, I inquire for the china-closet, and next for the picture-gallery. I cannot defend the order of preference, but by saying, that we have all some taste or other, of too ancient a date to admit of our remembering distinctly that it was an acquired one. I can call to mind the first play, and the first exhibition, that I was taken to; but I am not conscious of a time when china jars and saucers were introduced into my imagination.

I had no repugnance then—why should I now have? —to those little, lawless, azure-tinctured grotesques, that under the notion of men and women, float about, uncircumscribed by any element, in that world before perspective—a china tea-cup.

I like to see my old friends—whom distance cannot diminish—figuring up in the air (so they appear to our optics), yet on *terra firma* still—for so we must in courtesy interpret that speck of deeper blue, which the decorous artist, to prevent absurdity, has made to spring up beneath their sandals.

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12. **lawless, azure-tinctured grotesques:** quaint figures in blue which do not conform to any of the laws of art or **perspective** (lines 14–15), the device by which objects drawn or painted on a flat surface are given depth and distance, as they would really appear to the eye.

18. **terra firma:** dry land.

I love the men with women's faces, and the women, if possible, with still more womanish expressions.

Here is a young and courtly Mandarin, handing tea to a lady from a salver—two miles off. See how distance seems to set off respect! And here the same lady, or another—for likeness is identity on tea-cups—is stepping into a little fairy boat, moored on the hither side of this calm garden river, with a dainty mincing foot, which in a right angle of incidence (as angles go in our world) must infallibly land her in the midst of a flowery mead—a furlong off on the other side of the same strange stream!

Farther on — if far or near can be predicated of their world—see horses, trees, pagodas, dancing the hays.

Here—a cow and rabbit couchant, and co-extensive— so objects show, seen through the lucid atmosphere of fine Cathay.

I was pointing out to my cousin last evening, over our Hyson (which we are old-fashioned enough to drink unmixed still of an afternoon), some of these *speciosa miracula* upon a set of extraordinary old blue china (a recent purchase) which we were now for the first time using; and could not help remarking, how favourable circumstances had been to us of late years, that we could afford to please the eye sometimes with trifles of this sort—when a passing sentiment seemed to over-shade

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3. **Mandarin:** a Chinese official.

14–15. **the hays:** an old round dance of the English country folk.

16. **couchant:** crouching.

18. **Cathay:** the ancient name for China.

20. **Hyson:** a green tea from China, so named from the Chinese word meaning "flourishing spring."

21–22. **speciosa miracula:** bright marvels.

the brows of my companion. I am quick at detecting these summer clouds in Bridget.

"I wish the good old times would come again," she said, "when we were not quite so rich. I do not mean, that I want to be poor; but there was a middle state;" —so she was pleased to ramble on,—"in which I am sure we were a great deal happier. A purchase is but a purchase, now that you have money enough and to spare. Formerly it used to be a triumph. When we coveted a cheap luxury (and, O! how much ado I had to get you to consent in those times!) we were used to have a debate two or three days before, and to weigh the *for* and *against*, and think what we might spare it out of, and what saving we could hit upon, that should be an equivalent. A thing was worth buying then, when we felt the money that we paid for it.

"Do you remember the brown suit, which you made to hang upon you, till all your friends cried shame upon you, it grew so threadbare,—and all because of that folio Beaumont and Fletcher, which you dragged home late at night from Barker's in Covent Garden? Do you remember how we eyed it for weeks before we could make up our minds to the purchase, and had not come to a determination till it was near ten o'clock of the Saturday night, when you set off from Islington, fearing you should be too late—and when the old bookseller with some grumbling opened his shop, and by the twinkling taper (for he was setting bedwards) lighted out the relic from his dusty treasures—and when you lugged it home, wishing it were twice as cumbersome—and when you presented it to me—and when we were exploring the perfectness of it (*collating* you called it)—

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32. **collating**: examining critically.

and while I was repairing some of the loose leaves with paste, which your impatience would not suffer to be left till daybreak—was there no pleasure in being a poor man? or can those neat black clothes which you wear now, and are so careful to keep brushed, since we have become rich and finical, give you half the honest vanity, with which you flaunted it about in that overworn suit —your old corbeau—for four or five weeks longer than you should have done, to pacify your conscience for the mighty sum of fifteen—or sixteen shillings was it?—a great affair we thought it then—which you had lavished on the old folio. Now you can afford to buy any book that pleases you, but I do not see that you ever bring me home any nice old purchases now.

" When you came home with twenty apologies for laying out a less number of shillings upon that print after Leonardo, which we christened the ' Lady Blanche '; when you looked at the purchase, and thought of the money—and thought of the money, and looked again at the picture—was there no pleasure in being a poor man? Now, you have nothing to do but to walk into Colnaghi's, and buy a wilderness of Leonardos. Yet do you?

" Then, do you remember our pleasant walks to Enfield, and Potter's Bar, and Waltham, when we had a holiday—holidays, and all other fun, are gone, now we are rich—and the little hand-basket in which I used to deposit our day's fare of savoury cold lamb and salad—and how you would pry about at noontide for some

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6. **finical:** excessively fastidious.

8. **corbeau:** French for raven; probably here referring to the shiny, worn appearance of the old coat.

17. **Leonardo.** See note on page 263.

22. **a wilderness of Leonardos.** Cf. Shylock's reference to "a wilderness of monkeys,"—" Merchant of Venice," III, i, 127–128.

decent house, where we might go in, and produce our store—only paying for the ale that you must call for—and speculate upon the looks of the landlady, and whether she was likely to allow us a table-cloth—and wish for such another honest hostess, as Izaak Walton has described many a one on the pleasant banks of the Lea, when he went a-fishing—and sometimes they would prove obliging enough, and sometimes they would look grudgingly upon us—but we had cheerful looks still for one another, and would eat our plain food savourily, scarcely grudging Piscator his Trout Hall? Now, when we go out a day's pleasuring, which is seldom moreover, we *ride* part of the way—and go into a fine inn, and order the best of dinners, never debating the expense—which, after all, never has half the relish of those chance country snaps, when we were at the mercy of uncertain usage, and a precarious welcome.

"You are too proud to see a play anywhere now but in the pit. Do you remember where it was we used to sit, when we saw the Battle of Hexham, and the Surrender of Calais, and Bannister and Mrs. Bland in the Children in the Wood—when we squeezed out our shillings a-piece to sit three or four times in a season in the one-shilling gallery—where you felt all the time that you ought not to have brought me—and more strongly I felt obligation to you for having brought me—and the

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5. **Izaak Walton.** See note on page 254.

11. **grudging Piscator his Trout Hall:** Piscator, the fisherman in "The Complete Angler," who built a fishing-house on the bank of a famous trout stream.

20–21. **Battle of Hexham, and the Surrender of Calais:** two plays by Colman the Younger.

22. **Children in the Wood:** a play by Thomas Morton, a favorite of Lamb's.

pleasure was the better for a little shame—and when the curtain drew up, what cared we for our place in the house, or what mattered it where we were sitting, when our thoughts were with Rosalind in Arden, or with Viola at the Court of Illyria? You used to say, that the gallery was the best place of all for enjoying a play socially —that the relish of such exhibitions must be in proportion to the infrequency of going—that the company we met there, not being in general readers of plays, were obliged to attend the more, and did attend, to what was going on, on the stage—because a word lost would have been a chasm, which it was impossible for them to fill up. With such reflections we consoled our pride then —and I appeal to you, whether, as a woman, I met generally with less attention and accommodation, than I have done since in more expensive situations in the house? The getting in indeed, and the crowding up those inconvenient staircases, was bad enough,—but there was still a law of civility to women recognized to quite as great an extent as we ever found in the other passages—and how a little difficulty overcome heightened the snug seat, and the play afterwards! Now we can only pay our money, and walk in. You cannot see, you say, in the galleries now. I am sure we saw, and heard too, well enough then—but sight, and all, I think, is gone with our poverty.

"There was pleasure in eating strawberries, before they became quite common—in the first dish of peas, while they were yet dear—to have them for a nice supper, a treat. What treat can we have now? If we were to treat ourselves now—that is, to have dainties a little

4. **Rosalind in Arden.** Rosalind's romance is laid in the forest of Arden in "As You Like It."

4–5. **Viola at the Court of Illyria:** "Twelfth Night."

above our means, it would be selfish and wicked. It is the very little more that we allow ourselves beyond what the actual poor can get at, that makes what I call a treat—when two people living together, as we have done, now and then indulge themselves in a cheap luxury, which both like; while each apologizes, and is willing to take both halves of the blame to his single share. I see no harm in people making much of themselves in that sense of the word. It may give them a hint how to make much of others. But now—what I mean by the word—we never do make much of ourselves. None but the poor can do it. I do not mean the veriest poor of all, but persons as we were, just above poverty.

"I know what you were going to say, that it is mighty pleasant at the end of the year to make all meet—and much ado we used to have every Thirty-first Night of December to account for our exceedings—many a long face did you make over your puzzled accounts, and in contriving to make it out how we had spent so much—or that we had not spent so much—or that it was impossible we should spend so much next year—and still we found our slender capital decreasing—but then, betwixt ways, and projects, and compromises of one sort or another, and talk of curtailing this charge, and doing without that for the future—and the hope that youth brings, and laughing spirits (in which you were never poor till now), we pocketed up our loss, and in conclusion, with 'lusty brimmers' (as you used to quote it out of *hearty cheerful Mr. Cotton*, as you called him), we used to welcome in the 'coming guest.' Now we have no reckoning at all at the end of the old year—

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28. "lusty brimmers." See poem quoted on pages 39–40; also note on Cotton, page 256.

no flattering promises about the new year doing better for us.''

Bridget is so sparing of her speech on most occasions, that when she gets into a rhetorical vein, I am careful how I interrupt it. I could not help, however, smiling at the phantom of wealth which her dear imagination had conjured up out of a clear income of poor—hundred pounds a year. '' It is true we were happier when we were poorer, but we were also younger, my cousin. I am afraid we must put up with the excess, for if we were to shake the superflux into the sea, we should not much mend ourselves. That we had much to struggle with, as we grew up together, we have reason to be most thankful. It strengthened, and knit our compact closer. We could never have been what we have been to each other, if we had always had the sufficiency which you now complain of. The resisting power—those natural dilations of the youthful spirit, which circumstances cannot straiten—with us are long since passed away. Competence to age is supplementary youth; a sorry supplement indeed, but I fear the best that is to be had. We must ride where we formerly walked: live better and lie softer—and shall be wise to do so—than we had means to do in those good old days you speak of. Yet could those days return—could you and I once more walk our thirty miles a-day—could Bannister and Mrs. Bland again be young, and you and I be young to see them—could the good old one-shilling gallery days return—they are dreams, my cousin, now—but could you and I at this moment, instead of this quiet argument, by our well-carpeted fireside, sitting on this luxurious

11. **superflux:** superfluity; excess.

20 ff. **Competence to age,** etc.: sufficient money in old age is granted as a recompense for vanished youth.

sofa—be once more struggling up those inconvenient staircases, pushed about, and squeezed, and elbowed by the poorest rabble of poor gallery scramblers—could I once more hear those anxious shrieks of yours—and the delicious *Thank God, we are safe*, which always followed when the topmost stair, conquered, let in the first light of the whole cheerful theatre down beneath us—I know not the fathom line that ever touched a descent so deep as I would be willing to bury more wealth in than Crœsus had, or the great Jew R—— is supposed to have, to purchase it. And now do just look at that merry little Chinese waiter holding an umbrella, big enough for a bed-tester, over the head of that pretty insipid half-Madonna-ish chit of a lady in that very blue summer-house."

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13. **bed-tester:** a canopy over a bed.

## XX. POOR RELATIONS

A POOR relation—is the most irrelevant thing in nature,—a piece of impertinent correspondency,—an odious approximation,—a haunting conscience,—a preposterous shadow, lengthening in the noontide of your prosperity,—an unwelcome remembrancer,—a perpetually recurring mortification,—a drain on your purse,—a more intolerable dun upon your pride,—a drawback upon success,—a rebuke to your rising,—a stain in your blood,—a blot on your 'scutcheon,—a rent in your garment,—a death's head at your banquet,—Agathocles' pot,—a Mordecai in your gate,—a Lazarus at your door,—a lion in your path,—a frog in your chamber,—a fly in your ointment,—a mote in your eye,—a triumph to your enemy,—an apology to your friends,—the one thing not needful,—the hail in harvest,—the ounce of sour in a pound of sweet.

He is known by his knock. Your heart telleth you "That is Mr. ——." A rap, between familiarity and respect; that demands, and, at the same time, seems to despair of, entertainment. He entereth smiling, and—embarrassed. He holdeth out his hand to you to shake, and—draweth it back again. He casually looketh in about dinner-time—when the table is full. He offereth to go away, seeing you have company—but is induced to stay. He filleth a chair, and your visitor's two chil-

2–3. **a piece . . . approximation:** bearing the family likeness to an impudent and hateful degree.

dren are accommodated at a side table. He never com eth upon open days, when your wife says with some complacency, "My dear, perhaps Mr. —— will drop in to-day." He remembereth birthdays—and professeth he is fortunate to have stumbled upon one. He declareth against fish, the turbot being small—yet suffereth himself to be importuned into a slice, against his first resolution. He sticketh by the port—yet will be prevailed upon to empty the remainder glass of claret, if a stranger press it upon him. He is a puzzle to the servants, who are fearful of being too obsequious, or not civil enough, to him. The guests think "they have seen him before." Every one speculateth upon his condition; and the most part take him to be—a tide-waiter. He calleth you by your Christian name, to imply that his other is the same with your own. He is too familiar by half, yet you wish he had less diffidence. With half the familiarity he might pass for a casual dependent; with more boldness he would be in no danger of being taken for what he is. He is too humble for a friend, yet taketh on him more state than befits a client. He is a worse guest than a country tenant, inasmuch as he bringeth up no rent—yet 'tis odds, from his garb and demeanour, that your guests take him for one. He is asked to make one at the whist table; refuseth on the score of poverty, and—resents being left out. When the company break up, he proffereth to go for a coach—and lets the servant go. He recollects your grandfather; and will thrust in some mean, and quite unimportant anecdote of—the family. He knew it when it was not quite so flourishing as "he is blest in seeing it now." He re-

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14. **tide-waiter:** a Customs officer who boards ships upon their entering port.

viveth past situations, to institute what he calleth—favourable comparisons. With a reflecting sort of congratulation, he will inquire the price of your furniture; and insults you with a special commendation of your window-curtains. He is of opinion that the urn is the more elegant shape, but, after all, there was something more comfortable about the old tea-kettle—which you must remember. He dare say you must find a great convenience in having a carriage of your own, and appealeth to your lady if it is not so. Inquireth if you have had your arms done on vellum yet; and did not know till lately, that such-and-such had been the crest of the family. His memory is unseasonable; his compliments perverse; his talk a trouble; his stay pertinacious; and when he goeth away, you dismiss his chair into a corner, as precipitately as possible, and feel fairly rid of two nuisances.

There is a worse evil under the sun, and that is—a female Poor Relation. You may do something with the other; you may pass him off tolerably well; but your indigent she-relative is hopeless. "He is an old humourist," you may say, "and affects to go threadbare. His circumstances are better than folks would take them to be. You are fond of having a Character at your table, and truly he is one." But in the indications of female poverty there can be no disguise. No woman dresses below herself from caprice. The truth must out without shuffling. "She is plainly related to the L——s; or what does she at their house?" She is, in all probability, your wife's cousin. Nine times out of ten, at least, this is the case. Her garb is something between a gentlewoman and a beggar, yet the former evidently predominates. She is most provokingly humble, and ostentatiously sensible to her inferiority. He may

require to be repressed sometimes—*aliquando sufflaminandus erat*—but there is no raising her. You send her soup at dinner, and she begs to be helped—after the gentlemen. Mr. —— requests the honour of taking wine with her; she hesitates between Port and Madeira, and chooses the former—because he does. She calls the servant *Sir;* and insists on not troubling him to hold her plate. The housekeeper patronizes her. The children's governess takes upon her to correct her, when she has mistaken the piano for a harpsichord.

Richard Amlet, Esq., in the play, is a notable instance of the disadvantages, to which this chimerical notion of *affinity constituting a claim to acquaintance,* may subject the spirit of a gentleman. A little foolish blood is all that is betwixt him and a lady with a great estate. His stars are perpetually crossed by the malignant maternity of an old woman, who persists in calling him "her son Dick." But she has wherewithal in the end to recompense his indignities, and float him again upon the brilliant surface, under which it had been her seeming business and pleasure all along to sink him. All men, besides, are not of Dick's temperament. I knew an Amlet in real life, who, wanting Dick's buoyancy, sank indeed. Poor W—— was of my own standing at Christ's, a fine classic, and a youth of promise. If he had a blemish, it was too much pride; but its quality was inoffensive; it was not of that sort which hardens the heart, and serves to keep inferiors at a distance; it

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1–2. **aliquando sufflaminandus erat:** it was occasionally necessary to check him.

12. **chimerical:** absurd.

20. **brilliant surface,** of society.

24. **W——:** this is the F——, or Favell, of the essay, "Christ's Hospital." See Lamb's Key under F——.

only sought to ward off derogation from itself. It was the principle of self-respect carried as far as it could go, without infringing upon that respect, which he would have every one else equally maintain for himself. He would have you to think alike with him on this topic. Many a quarrel have I had with him, when we were rather older boys, and our tallness made us more obnoxious to observation in the blue clothes, because I would not thread the alleys and blind ways of the town with him to elude notice, when we have been out together on a holiday in the streets of this sneering and prying metropolis. W—— went, sore with these notions, to Oxford, where the dignity and sweetness of a scholar's life, meeting with the alloy of a humble introduction, wrought in him a passionate devotion to the place, with a profound aversion from the society. The servitor's gown (worse than his school array) clung to him with Nessian venom. He thought himself ridiculous in a garb, under which Latimer must have walked erect; and in which Hooker, in his young days, possibly flaunted in a vein of no discommendable vanity. In the depth of college shades, or in his lonely chamber, the poor student shrunk from observation. He found shelter among books, which insult not; and studies, that ask no questions of a youth's finances. He was lord of his library, and seldom cared for looking out beyond his domains. The healing influence of studious pursuits was upon him, to soothe and to abstract. He was almost a healthy man; when the waywardness of his fate broke out against him with a second and worse malignity. The father of W—— had hitherto exercised the humble profession of house-painter at N——, near Oxford. A

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7. **tallness.** Lamb is, of course, referring to his short stature.

supposed interest with some of the heads of colleges had now induced him to take up his abode in that city, with the hope of being employed upon some public works which were talked of. From that moment I read in the countenance of the young man, the determination which at length tore him from academical pursuits for ever. To a person unacquainted with our Universities, the distance between the gownsmen and the townsmen, as they are called—the trading part of the latter especially—is carried to an excess that would appear harsh and incredible. The temperament of W——'s father was diametrically the reverse of his own. Old W—— was a little, busy, cringing tradesman, who, with his son upon his arm, would stand bowing and scraping, cap in hand, to anything that wore the semblance of a gown—insensible to the winks and opener remonstrances of the young man, to whose chamber-fellow, or equal in standing, perhaps, he was thus obsequiously and gratuitously ducking. Such a state of things could not last. W—— must change the air of Oxford or be suffocated. He chose the former; and let the sturdy moralist, who strains the point of the filial duties as high as they can bear, censure the dereliction; he cannot estimate the struggle. I stood with W——, the last afternoon I ever saw him, under the eaves of his paternal dwelling. It was in the fine lane leading from the High Street to the back of * * * * college, where W—— kept his rooms. He seemed thoughtful, and more reconciled. I ventured to rally him—finding him in a better mood—upon a representation of the Artist Evangelist, which the old man, whose affairs were beginning to flourish, had

8. **gownsmen**: the university students clad in their academic gowns.

30. **Artist Evangelist**: St. Luke, the patron saint of painters.

caused to be set up in a splendid sort of frame over his really handsome shop, either as a token of prosperity, or badge of gratitude to his saint. W—— looked up at the Luke, and, like Satan, "knew his mounted sign—and fled." A letter on his father's table the next morning, announced that he had accepted a commission in a regiment about to embark for Portugal. He was among the first who perished before the walls of St. Sebastian.

I do not know how, upon a subject which I began with treating half seriously, I should have fallen upon a recital so eminently painful; but this theme of poor relationship is replete with so much matter for tragic as well as comic associations, that it is difficult to keep the account distinct without blending. The earliest impressions which I received on this matter, are certainly not attended with anything painful, or very humiliating, in the recalling. At my father's table (no very splendid one) was to be found, every Saturday, the mysterious figure of an aged gentleman, clothed in neat black, of a sad yet comely appearance. His deportment was of the essence of gravity; his words few or none; and I was not to make a noise in his presence. I had little inclination to have done so—for my cue was to admire in silence. A particular elbow-chair was appropriated to him, which was in no case to be violated. A peculiar sort of sweet pudding, which appeared on no other occasion, distinguished the days of his coming. I used to think him a prodigiously rich man. All I could make out of him was, that he and my father had been schoolfellows a world ago at Lincoln, and that he came from the Mint. The Mint I knew to be a place where

4–5. **"knew his mounted sign,"** etc.: paraphrased from "Paradise Lost," IV, 1013–1015.

8. **St. Sebastian.** Wellington took this Spanish town in 1813.

all the money was coined—and I thought he was the owner of all that money. Awful ideas of the Tower twined themselves about his presence. He seemed above human infirmities and passions. A sort of melancholy grandeur invested him. From some inexplicable doom. I fancied him obliged to go about in an eternal suit of mourning; a captive—a stately being, let out of the Tower on Saturdays. Often have I wondered at the temerity of my father, who, in spite of an habitual general respect which we all in common manifested towards him, would venture now and then to stand up against him in some argument, touching their youthful days. The houses of the ancient city of Lincoln are divided (as most of my readers know) between the dwellers on the hill, and in the valley. This marked distinction formed an obvious division between the boys who lived above (however brought together in a common school) and the boys whose paternal residence was on the plain; a sufficient cause of hostility in the code of these young Grotiuses. My father had been a leading Mountaineer; and would still maintain the general superiority, in skill and hardihood, of the *Above Boys* (his own faction) over the *Below Boys* (so were they called), of which party his contemporary had been a chieftain. Many and hot were the skirmishes on this topic—the only one upon which the old gentleman was ever brought out—and bad blood bred; even sometimes almost to the recommencement (so I expected) of actual hostilities. But my father, who scorned to insist upon advantages, generally contrived to turn the conversation upon some adroit by-commendation of the old Minster; in the gen-

2. **Awful ideas of the Tower:** the Tower of London, famous as a place of confinement for state prisoners.

31. **the old Minster:** Lincoln cathedral.

eral preference of which, before all other cathedrals in the island, the dweller on the hill, and the plain-born, could meet on a conciliating level, and lay down their less important differences. Once only I saw the old gentleman really ruffled, and I remembered with anguish the thought that came over me: "Perhaps he will never come here again." He had been pressed to take another plate of the viand, which I have already mentioned as the indispensable concomitant of his visits. He had refused, with a resistance amounting to rigour—when my aunt, an old Lincolnian, but who had something of this, in common with my cousin Bridget, that she would sometimes press civility out of season—uttered the following memorable application—"Do take another slice, Mr. Billet, for you do not get pudding every day."—The old gentleman said nothing at the time—but he took occasion in the course of the evening, when some argument had intervened between them, to utter with an emphasis which chilled the company, and which chills me now as I write it—"Woman, you are superannuated." John Billet did not survive long after the digesting of this affront; but he survived long enough to assure me that peace was actually restored! and, if I remember aright, another pudding was discreetly substituted in the place of that which had occasioned the offence. He died at the Mint (Anno 1781) where he had long held, what he accounted, a comfortable independence; and with five pounds, fourteen shillings, and a penny, which were found in his escritoire after his decease, left the world, blessing God that he had enough to bury him, and that he had never been obliged to any man for a sixpence. This was—a Poor Relation.

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10–11. **my aunt.** See essay, "My Relations."

## XXI. THE OLD MARGATE HOY

I AM fond of passing my vacations (I believe I have said so before) at one or other of the Universities. Next to these my choice would fix me at some woody spot, such as the neighbourhood of Henley affords in abundance, upon the banks of my beloved Thames. But somehow or other my cousin contrives to wheedle me once in three or four seasons to a watering-place. Old attachments cling to her in spite of experience. We have been dull at Worthing one summer, duller at Brighton another, dullest at Eastbourne a third, and are at this moment doing dreary penance at—Hastings!—and all because we were happy many years ago for a brief week at—Margate. That was our first sea-side experiment, and many circumstances combined to make it the most agreeable holiday of my life. We had neither of us seen the sea, and we had never been from home so long together in company.

Can I forget thee, thou old Margate Hoy, with thy weather-beaten sunburnt captain, and his rough accommodations—ill exchanged for the foppery and fresh-water niceness of the modern steam-packet? To the winds and waves thou committedst thy goodly freight-

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1–2. See essay, " Oxford in the Vacation."

4. **Henley:** midway between London and Oxford on the Thames.

9–13. **Worthing, Brighton,** etc.: famous channel resort towns.

age, and didst ask no aid of magic fumes, and spells, and boiling cauldrons. With the gales of heaven thou wentest swimmingly; or, when it was their pleasure, stoodest still with sailor-like patience. Thy course was natural, not forced, as in a hotbed; nor didst thou go poisoning the breath of ocean with sulphurous smoke—a great sea-chimera, chimneying and furnacing the deep; or liker to that fire-god parching up Scamander.

Can I forget thy honest, yet slender crew, with their coy reluctant responses (yet to the suppression of anything like contempt) to the raw questions, which we of the great city would be ever and anon putting to them, as to the uses of this or that strange naval implement? 'Specially can I forget thee, thou happy medium, thou shade of refuge between us and them, conciliating interpreter of their skill to our simplicity, comfortable ambassador between sea and land!—whose sailor-trousers did not more convincingly assure thee to be an adopted denizen of the former, than thy white cap, and whiter apron over them, with thy neat-fingered practice in thy culinary vocation, bespoke thee to have been of inland nurture heretofore—a master cook of Eastcheap? How busily didst thou ply thy multifarious occupation, cook, mariner, attendant, chamberlain; here, there, like another Ariel, flaming at once about all parts of the deck, yet with kindlier ministrations—not to assist the tempest, but, as if touched with a kindred sense of our infirmities, to soothe the qualms which that untried motion might haply raise in our crude land-fancies. And when the o'er-washing billows drove us below deck (for it was far gone in October, and we had stiff and blowing

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1. **magic fumes.** Steamboats had been employed on the Thames less than ten years at the time this essay was written.

weather) how did thy officious ministerings, still catering for our comfort, with cards, and cordials, and thy more cordial conversation, alleviate the closeness and the confinement of thy else (truth to say) not very savoury, nor very inviting, little cabin!

With these additaments to boot, we had on board a fellow-passenger, whose discourse in verity might have beguiled a longer voyage than we meditated, and have made mirth and wonder abound as far as the Azores. He was a dark, Spanish complexioned young man, remarkably handsome, with an officer-like assurance, and an insuppressible volubility of assertion. He was, in fact, the greatest liar I had met with then, or since. He was none of your hesitating, half story-tellers (a most painful description of mortals) who go on sounding your belief, and only giving you as much as they see you can swallow at a time—the nibbling pickpockets of your patience—but one who committed downright, daylight depredations upon his neighbour's faith. He did not stand shivering upon the brink, but was a hearty thorough-paced liar, and plunged at once into the depths of your credulity. I partly believe, he made pretty sure of his company. Not many rich, not many wise, or learned, composed at that time the common stowage of a Margate packet. We were, I am afraid, a set of as unseasoned Londoners (let our enemies give it a worse name) as Aldermanbury, or Watling Street, at that time of day could have supplied. There might be an exception or two among us, but I scorn to make any invidious distinctions among such a jolly, companionable ship's company, as those were whom I sailed with. Something too must be conceded to the *Genius Loci.* Had the con-

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32. **Genius Loci:** the spirit of the place.

fident fellow told us half the legends on land, which he favoured us with on the other element, I flatter myself the good sense of most of us would have revolted. But we were in a new world, with everything unfamiliar about us, and the time and place disposed us to the reception of any prodigious marvel whatsoever. Time has obliterated from my memory much of his wild fablings; and the rest would appear but dull, as written, and to be read on shore. He had been Aide-de-camp (among other rare accidents and fortunes) to a Persian prince, and at one blow had stricken off the head of the King of Carimania on horseback. He, of course, married the Prince's daughter. I forget what unlucky turn in the politics of that court, combining with the loss of his consort, was the reason of his quitting Persia; but with the rapidity of a magician he transported himself, along with his hearers, back to England, where we still found him in the confidence of great ladies. There was some story of a Princess—Elizabeth, if I remember—having intrusted to his care an extraordinary casket of jewels, upon some extraordinary occasion—but as I am not certain of the name or circumstance at this distance of time, I must leave it to the Royal daughters of England to settle the honour among themselves in private. I cannot call to mind half his pleasant wonders; but I perfectly remember, that in the course of his travels he had seen a phœnix; and he obligingly undeceived us of the vulgar error, that there is but one of that species at a time, assuring us that they were not uncommon in some parts of Upper Egypt. Hitherto he had found the most implicit listeners. His dreaming fancies had transported

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19. **Elizabeth:** daughter of George III.
27. **phœnix.** See note on page 279.

us beyond the "ignorant present." But when (still hardying more and more in his triumphs over our simplicity) he went on to affirm that he had actually sailed through the legs of the Colossus at Rhodes, it really became necessary to make a stand. And here I must do justice to the good sense and intrepidity of one of our party, a youth, that had hitherto been one of his most deferential auditors, who, from his recent reading, made bold to assure the gentleman, that there must be some mistake, as "the Colossus in question had been destroyed long since:" to whose opinion, delivered with all modesty, our hero was obliging enough to concede thus much, that "the figure was indeed a little damaged." This was the only opposition he met with, and it did not at all seem to stagger him, for he proceeded with his fables, which the same youth appeared to swallow with still more complacency than ever,—confirmed, as it were, by the extreme candour of that concession. With these prodigies he wheedled us on till we came in sight of the Reculvers, which one of our own company (having been the voyage before) immediately recognizing, and pointing out to us, was considered by us as no ordinary seaman.

All this time sat upon the edge of the deck quite a different character. It was a lad, apparently very poor, very infirm, and very patient. His eye was ever on the sea, with a smile: and, if he caught now and then some snatches of these wild legends, it was by accident, and they seemed not to concern him. The waves to him whispered more pleasant stories. He was as one, being with us, but not of us. He heard the bell of dinner ring with-

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1. **"ignorant present."** Cf. "Macbeth," I, v, 58.

20. **Reculvers:** towers of the old church of Reculver, on the Kent side of the Thames, near its mouth.

out stirring; and when some of us pulled out our private stores—our cold meat and our salads—he produced none, and seemed to want none. Only a solitary biscuit he had laid in; provision for the one or two days and nights, to which these vessels then were oftentimes obliged to prolong their voyage. Upon a nearer acquaintance with him, which he seemed neither to court nor decline, we learned that he was going to Margate, with the hope of being admitted into the Infirmary there for sea-bathing. His disease was a scrofula, which appeared to have eaten all over him. He expressed great hopes of a cure; and when we asked him, whether he had any friends where he was going, he replied, "he *had* no friends."

These pleasant, and some mournful passages, with the first sight of the sea, co-operating with youth, and a sense of holidays, and out-of-door adventure, to me that had been pent up in populous cities for many months before,—have left upon my mind the fragrance as of summer days gone by, bequeathing nothing but their remembrance for cold and wintry hours to chew upon.

Will it be thought a digression (it may spare some unwelcome comparisons), if I endeavour to account for the *dissatisfaction* which I have heard so many persons confess to have felt (as I did myself feel in part on this occasion), *at the sight of the sea for the first time?* I think the reason usually given—referring to the incapacity of actual objects for satisfying our preconceptions of them—scarcely goes deep enough into the ques-

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3–4. **biscuit**: the English biscuit is the American cracker.

15–21. Cf. "Paradise Lost," IX, 445. The spirit of the whole paragraph is better reflected, however, in Keats' sonnet, "To one who has been long in city pent." The sonnet was published in 1817, six years prior to the publication of this essay.

tion. Let the same person see a lion, an elephant, a mountain, for the first time in his life, and he shall perhaps feel himself a little mortified. The things do not fill up that space, which the idea of them seemed to take up in his mind. But they have still a correspondency to his first notion, and in time grow up to it, so as to produce a very similar impression: enlarging themselves (if I may say so) upon familiarity. But the sea remains a disappointment.—Is it not, that in *the latter* we had expected to behold (absurdly, I grant, but, I am afraid, by the law of imagination unavoidably) not a definite object, as those wild beasts, or that mountain compassable by the eye, but *all the sea at once,* THE COMMENSURATE ANTAGONIST OF THE EARTH? I do not say we tell ourselves so much, but the craving of the mind is to be satisfied with nothing less. I will suppose the case of a young person of fifteen (as I then was) knowing nothing of the sea, but from description. He comes to it for the first time—all that he has been reading of it all his life, and *that* the most enthusiastic part of life, —all he has gathered from narratives of wandering seamen; what he has gained from true voyages, and what he cherishes as credulously from romance and poetry; crowding their images, and exacting strange tributes from expectation.—He thinks of the great deep, and of those who go down unto it; of its thousand isles, and of the vast continents it washes; of its receiving the mighty Plata, or Orellana, into its bosom, without disturbance, or sense of augmentation; of Biscay swells, and the mariner

> For many a day, and many a dreadful night,
> Incessant labouring round the stormy Cape;

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28. **Orellana**: the old name for the Amazon River.

30–31. From Thomson's "Seasons," "Summer," I, 1002.

of fatal rocks, and the "still-vexed Bermoothes;" of great whirlpools, and the water-spout; of sunken ships, and sumless treasures swallowed up in the unrestoring depths; of fishes and quaint monsters, to which all that is terrible on earth—

> Be but as bugs to frighten babes withal,
> Compared with the creatures in the sea's entral;

of naked savages, and Juan Fernandez; of pearls, and shells; of coral beds, and of enchanted isles; of mermaids' grots—

I do not assert that in sober earnest he expects to be shown all these wonders at once, but he is under the tyranny of a mighty faculty, which haunts him with confused hints and shadows of all these; and when the actual object opens first upon him, seen (in tame weather too most likely) from our unromantic coasts—a speck, a slip of sea-water, as it shows to him—what can it prove but a very unsatisfying and even diminutive entertainment? Or if he has come to it from the mouth of a river, was it much more than the river widening? and, even out of sight of land, what had he but a flat watery horizon about him, nothing comparable to the vast o'er-curtaining sky, his familiar object, seen daily without dread or amazement?—Who, in similar circumstances, has not been tempted to exclaim with Charoba, in the poem of Gebir,—

> Is this the mighty ocean?—is this *all?*

I love town, or country; but this detestable Cinque Port is neither. I hate these scrubbed shoots, thrusting

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1. **"still-vexed Bermoothes":** the ever-disturbed Bermudas. See "The Tempest," I, ii, 229.

6–7. A misquoted memory from "Faerie Queen," II, xii, 25.

26. **poem of Gebir:** by Walter Savage Landor, published 1798.

out their starved foliage from between the horrid fissures of dusty innutritious rocks; which the amateur calls "verdure to the edge of the sea." I require woods, and they show me stunted coppices. I cry out for the water-brooks, and pant for fresh streams, and inland murmurs. I cannot stand all day on the naked beach, watching the capricious hues of the sea, shifting like the colours of a dying mullet. I am tired of looking out at the windows of this island-prison. I would fain retire into the interior of my cage. While I gaze upon the sea, I want to be on it, over it, across it. It binds me in with chains, as of iron. My thoughts are abroad. I should not so feel in Staffordshire. There is no home for me here. There is no sense of home at Hastings. It is a place of fugitive resort, an heterogeneous assemblage of sea-mews and stockbrokers, Amphitrites of the town, and misses that coquet with the Ocean. If it were what it was in its primitive shape, and what it ought to have remained, a fair honest fishing-town, and no more, it were something—with a few straggling fishermen's huts scattered about, artless as its cliffs, and with their materials filched from them, it were something. I could abide to dwell with Meschek; to assort with fisher-swains, and smugglers. There are, or I dream there are, many of this latter occupation here. Their faces become the place. I like a smuggler. He is the only honest thief. He robs nothing but the revenue,—an abstraction I never greatly cared about. I could go out with them in their mackerel boats, or about their less ostensible business, with some satisfaction. I can even tolerate

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4–5. **I cry out for the water-brooks, etc.** Cf. Psalm xvii.

16. **sea-mews:** gulls.

23. **Meschek.** Cf. Psalm cxx, 5.

these poor victims to monotony, who from day to day pace along the beach, in endless progress and recurrence, to watch their illicit countrymen—townsfolk or brethren perchance—whistling to the sheathing and unsheathing of their cutlasses (their only solace), who under the mild name of preventive service, keep up a legitimated civil warfare in the deplorable absence of a foreign one, to show their detestation of run hollands, and zeal for old England. But it is the visitants from town, that come here to *say* that they have been here, with no more relish of the sea than a pond perch, or a dace might be supposed to have, that are my aversion. I feel like a foolish dace in these regions, and have as little toleration for myself here, as for them. What can they want here? if they had a true relish of the ocean, why have they brought all this land luggage with them? or why pitch their civilized tents in the desert? What mean these scanty book-rooms—marine libraries as they entitle them—if the sea were, as they would have us believe, a book "to read strange matter in?" what are their foolish concert-rooms, if they come, as they would fain be thought to do, to listen to the music of the waves? All is false and hollow pretension. They come, because it is the fashion, and to spoil the nature of the place. They are mostly, as I have said, stock-brokers; but I have watched the better sort of them—now and then, an honest citizen (of the old stamp), in the simplicity of his heart, shall bring down his wife and daughters, to taste the sea breezes. I always know the date of their arrival. It is easy to see it in their countenance. A day or two they go wandering on the shingles, picking up

1. **poor victims to monotony**: the revenue officers.
8. **run hollands**: smuggled gin.
20. **"to read strange matter in."** Cf. "Macbeth," I, v, 63–64.

cockle-shells, and thinking them great things; but, in a poor week, imagination slackens: they begin to discover that cockles produce no pearls, and then—O then!—if I could interpret for the pretty creatures (I know they have not the courage to confess it themselves) how gladly would they exchange their sea-side rambles for a Sunday walk on the green-sward of their accustomed Twickenham meadows!

I would ask of one of these sea-charmed emigrants, who think they truly love the sea, with its wild usages, what would their feelings be, if some of the unsophisticated aborigines of this place, encouraged by their courteous questionings here, should venture, on the faith of such assured sympathy between them, to return the visit, and come up to see—London. I must imagine them with their fishing-tackle on their back, as we carry our town necessaries. What a sensation would it cause in Lothbury! What vehement laughter would it not excite among

The daughters of Cheapside, and wives of Lombard Street!

I am sure that no town-bred, or inland-born subjects, can feel their true and natural nourishment at these sea-places. Nature, where she does not mean us for mariners and vagabonds, bids us stay at home. The salt foam seems to nourish a spleen. I am not half so good-natured as by the milder waters of my natural river. I would exchange these sea-gulls for swans, and scud a swallow for ever about the banks of Thamesis.

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8. **Twickenham meadows.** See note on page 266.

20. The line is inaccurately quoted from Thomas Randolph's "Ode to Master Anthony Stafford."

## XXII. BLAKESMOOR IN H——SHIRE

I DO not know a pleasure more affecting than to range at will over the deserted apartments of some fine old family mansion. The traces of extinct grandeur admit of a better passion than envy: and contemplations on the great and good, whom we fancy in succession to have been its inhabitants, weave for us illusions, incompatible with the bustle of modern occupancy, and vanities of foolish present aristocracy. The same difference of feeling, I think, attends us between entering an empty and a crowded church. In the latter it is chance but some present human frailty—an act of inattention on the part of some of the auditory—or a trait of affectation, or worse, vain-glory, on that of the preacher—puts us by our best thoughts, disharmonizing the place and the occasion. But would'st thou know the beauty of holiness?—go alone on some week-day, borrowing the keys of good Master Sexton, traverse the cool aisles of some country church: think of the piety that has kneeled there—the congregations, old and young, that have found consolation there—the meek pastor—the docile parishioner. With no disturbing emotions, no cross conflicting comparisons, drink in the tranquillity of the place, till thou thyself become as fixed and motionless as the marble effigies that kneel and weep around thee.

Journeying northward lately, I could not resist going some few miles out of my road to look upon the remains of an old great house with which I had been impressed

in this way in infancy. I was apprised that the owner of it had lately pulled it down; still I had a vague notion that it could not all have perished, that so much solidity with magnificence could not have been crushed all at once into the mere dust and rubbish which I found it.

The work of ruin had proceeded with a swift hand indeed, and the demolition of a few weeks had reduced it to—an antiquity.

I was astonished at the indistinction of everything. Where had stood the great gates? What bounded the courtyard? Whereabout did the out-houses commence? a few bricks only lay as representatives of that which was so stately and so spacious.

Death does not shrink up his human victim at this rate. The burnt ashes of a man weigh more in their proportion.

Had I seen these brick-and-mortar knaves at their process of destruction, at the plucking of every panel I should have felt the varlets at my heart. I should have cried out to them to spare a plank at least out of the cheerful store-room, in whose hot window-seat I used to sit and read Cowley, with the grass-plat before, and the hum and flappings of that one solitary wasp that ever haunted it about me—it is in mine ears now, as oft as summer returns; or a panel of the yellow room.

Why, every plank and panel of that house for me had magic in it. The tapestried bedrooms—tapestry so much better than painting—not adorning merely, but peopling the wainscots—at which childhood ever and anon would steal a look, shifting its coverlid (replaced as quickly) to exercise its tender courage in a mo-

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23. **Cowley.** See note on page 273.

mentary eye-encounter with those stern bright visages, staring reciprocally—all Ovid on the walls, in colours vivider than his descriptions. Actæon in mid sprout, with the unappeasable prudery of Diana; and the still more provoking, and almost culinary coolness of Dan Phœbus, eel-fashion, deliberately divesting of Marsyas.

Then, that haunted room—in which old Mrs. Battle died—whereinto I have crept, but always in the daytime, with a passion of fear; and a sneaking curiosity, terror-tainted, to hold communication with the past.—*How shall they build it up again?*

It was an old deserted place, yet not so long deserted but that traces of the splendour of past inmates were everywhere apparent. Its furniture was still standing —even to the tarnished gilt leather battledores, and crumbling feathers of shuttlecocks in the nursery, which told that children had once played there. But I was a lonely child, and had the range at will of every apartment, knew every nook and corner, wondered and worshipped everywhere.

The solitude of childhood is not so much the mother of thought, as it is the feeder of love, and silence, and admiration. So strange a passion for the place possessed me in those years, that, though there lay—I shame to say how few roods distant from the mansion— half hid by trees, what I judged some romantic lake, such was the spell which bound me to the house, and such my carefulness not to pass its strict and proper precincts, that the idle waters lay unexplored for me; and not till late in life, curiosity prevailing over elder devotion, I found, to my astonishment, a pretty brawling brook had been the Lacus Incognitus of my infancy.

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32. **Lacus Incognitus:** unknown lake.

Variegated views, extensive prospects—and those at no great distance from the house—I was told of such—what were they to me, being out of the boundaries of my Eden?—So far from a wish to roam, I would have drawn, methought, still closer the fences of my chosen prison; and have been hemmed in by a yet securer cincture of those excluding garden walls. I could have exclaimed with that garden-loving poet—

> Bind me, ye woodbines, in your 'twines;
> Curl me about, ye gadding vines;
> And oh so close your circles lace,
> That I may never leave this place;
> But, lest your fetters prove too weak,
> Ere I your silken bondage break,
> Do you, O brambles, chain me too,
> And, courteous briars, nail me through![1]

I was here as in a lonely temple. Snug firesides—the low-built roof—parlours ten feet by ten—frugal boards, and all the homeliness of home—these were the condition of my birth—the wholesome soil which I was planted in. Yet, without impeachment to their tenderest lessons, I am not sorry to have had glances of something beyond; and to have taken, if but a peep, in childhood, at the contrasting accidents of a great fortune. To have the feeling of gentility, it is not necessary to have been born gentle. The pride of ancestry may be had on cheaper terms than to be obliged to an importunate race of ancestors; and the coatless antiquary in

[1] Marvell on Appleton House, to the Lord Fairfax.

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8. **garden-loving poet.** Cf. the quotation from Marvell on pages 105–106; also note on Marvell, page 266.

28. **coatless:** having no coat of arms indicative of an old family.

his unemblazoned cell, revolving the long line of a Mowbray's or De Clifford's pedigree, at those sounding names may warm himself into as gay a vanity as those who do inherit them. The claims of birth are ideal merely, and what herald shall go about to strip me of an idea? Is it trenchant to their swords? can it be hacked off as a spur can? or torn away like a tarnished garter?

What, else, were the families of the great to us? what pleasure should we take in their tedious genealogies, or their capitulatory brass monuments? What to us the uninterrupted current of their bloods, if our own did not answer within us to a cognate and correspondent elevation?

Or wherefore, else, O tattered and diminished 'Scutcheon that hung upon the time-worn walls of thy princely stairs, BLAKESMOOR! have I in childhood so oft stood poring upon thy mystic characters—thy emblematic supporters, with their prophetic "Resurgam"—till, every dreg of peasantry purging off, I received into myself Very Gentility? Thou wert first in my morning eyes; and of nights, hast detained my steps from bedward, till it was but a step from gazing at thee to dreaming on thee.

This is the only true gentry by adoption; the veritable change of blood, and not, as empirics have fabled, by transfusion.

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1. **unemblazoned:** having none of the display of heraldry.

8. **garter:** a decorative ribbon.

11. **capitulatory brass monuments:** brass tablets containing a capitulation, or summary, of the life or deeds of the one commemorated.

15–16. **'Scutcheon:** escutcheon, the shield of heraldry.

19. **"Resurgam":** the motto, "I shall arise," upon the shield.

26. **empirics:** medical quacks.

Who it was by dying that had earned the splendid trophy, I knew not, I inquired not; but its fading rags, and colours cobweb-stained, told that its subject was of two centuries back.

And what if my ancestor at that date was some Damœtas—feeding flocks, not his own, upon the hills of Lincoln—did I in less earnest vindicate to myself the family trappings of this once proud Ægon?—repaying by a backward triumph the insults he might possibly have heaped in his lifetime upon my poor pastoral progenitor.

If it were presumption so to speculate, the present owners of the mansion had least reason to complain. They had long forsaken the old house of their fathers for a newer trifle; and I was left to appropriate to myself what images I could pick up, to raise my fancy, or to soothe my vanity.

I was the true descendent of those old W——s; and not the present family of that name, who had fled the old waste places.

Mine was that gallery of good old family portraits, which as I have gone over, giving them in fancy my own family name, one—and then another—would seem to smile, reaching forward from the canvas, to recognize the new relationship; while the rest looked grave, as it seemed, at the vacancy in their dwelling, and thoughts of fled posterity.

That Beauty with the cool blue pastoral drapery, and

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5–8. **Damœtas . . . Ægon:** names of shepherds in Virgil's "Eclogues."

10–11. **pastoral progenitor:** shepherd ancestor.

18. **W——s.** The name is Ward, but Lamb is, of course, referring to the Plumers, this being another of his attempts to mystify the reader.

a lamb—that hung next the great bay window—with the bright yellow H——shire hair, and eye of watchet hue —so like my Alice!—I am persuaded she was a true Elia—Mildred Elia, I take it.

Mine too, BLAKESMOOR, was thy noble Marble Hall, with its mosaic pavements, and its Twelve Cæsars—stately busts in marble—ranged round: of whose countenances, young reader of faces as I was, the frowning beauty of Nero, I remember, had most of my wonder; but the mild Galba had my love. There they stood in the coldness of death, yet freshness of immortality.

Mine too, thy lofty Justice Hall, with its one chair of authority, high-backed and wickered, once the terror of luckless poacher, or self-forgetful maiden—so common since, that bats have roosted in it.

Mine too—whose else?—thy costly fruit-garden, with its sun-baked southern wall; the ampler pleasure-garden, rising backwards from the house in triple terraces, with flower-pots now of palest lead, save that a speck here and there, saved from the elements, bespake their pristine state to have been gilt and glittering; the verdant quarters backwarder still; and, stretching still beyond, in old formality, thy firry wilderness, the haunt of the squirrel, and the day-long murmuring wood-pigeon, with that antique image in the centre, God or Goddess I wist not; but child of Athens or old Rome paid never a sincerer worship to Pan or to Sylvanus in their native groves, than I to that fragmental mystery.

Was it for this, that I kissed my childish hands too fervently in your idol worship, walks and windings of

2. **H——shire:** Hertfordshire.
3. **Alice,** Winterton.
6. **Twelve Cæsars.** See note on page 273.

BLAKESMOOR! for this, or what sin of mine, has the plough passed over your pleasant places? I sometimes think that as men, when they die, do not die all, so of their extinguished habitations there may be a hope—a germ to be revivified.

## XXIII. THE SUPERANNUATED MAN

Sera tamen respexit
Libertas. VIRGIL.

A Clerk I was in London gay.
O'KEEFE.

IF peradventure, Reader, it has been thy lot to waste the golden years of thy life—thy shining youth—in the irksome confinement of an office; to have thy prison days prolonged through middle age down to decrepitude and silver hairs, without hope of release or respite; to have lived to forget that there are such things as holidays, or to remember them but as the prerogatives of childhood; then, and then only, will you be able to appreciate my deliverance.

It is now six-and-thirty years since I took my seat at the desk in Mincing Lane. Melancholy was the transition at fourteen from the abundant play-time, and the frequently-intervening vacations of school-days, to the eight, nine, and sometimes ten hours' a-day attendance at a counting-house. But time partially reconciles us to anything. I gradually became content—doggedly contented, as wild animals in cages.

It is true I had my Sundays to myself; but Sundays, admirable as the institution of them is for purposes of

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1–2. **Sera tamen respexit Libertas**: though late, freedom regarded me. From Virgil's "Eclogues," I, 27.

worship, are for that very reason the very worst adapted for days of unbending and recreation.[1] In particular, there is a gloom for me attendant upon a city Sunday, a weight in the air. I miss the cheerful cries of London, the music, and the ballad-singers—the buzz and stirring murmur of the streets. Those eternal bells depress me. The closed shops repel me. Prints, pictures, all the glittering and endless succession of knacks and gewgaws, and ostentatiously displayed wares of tradesmen, which make a week-day saunter through the less busy parts of the metropolis so delightful—are shut out. No book-stalls deliciously to idle over—no busy faces to recreate the idle man who contemplates them ever passing by—the very face of business a charm by contrast to his temporary relaxation from it. Nothing to be seen but unhappy countenances—or half-happy at best—of emancipated 'prentices and little tradesfolks, with here and there a servant-maid that has got leave to go out, who, slaving all the week, with the habit has lost almost all the capacity of enjoying a free hour; and livelily expressing the hollowness of a day's pleasuring. The very strollers in the fields on that day look anything but comfortable.

But besides Sundays I had a day at Easter, and a day at Christmas, with a full week in the summer to go and

[1] Our ancestors, the noble old Puritans of Cromwell's Day, could distinguish between a day of religious rest and a day of recreation; and while they exacted a rigorous abstinence from all amusements (even to the walking out of nurserymaids with their little charges in the fields) upon the Sabbath; in the lieu of the superstitious observance of the saints' days, which they abrogated, they humanely gave to the apprentices and poorer sort of people every alternate Thursday for a day of entire sport and recreation. A strain of piety and policy to be commended above the profane mockery of the Stuarts and their book of sports.

air myself in my native fields of Hertfordshire. This last was a great indulgence; and the prospect of its recurrence, I believe, alone kept me up through the year, and made my durance tolerable. But when the week came round, did the glittering phantom of the distance keep touch with me? or rather was it not a series of seven uneasy days, spent in restless pursuit of pleasure, and a wearisome anxiety to find out how to make the most of them? Where was the quiet, where the promised rest? Before I had a taste of it, it was vanished. I was at the desk again, counting upon the fifty-one tedious weeks that must intervene before such another snatch would come. Still the prospect of its coming threw something of an illumination upon the darker side of my captivity. Without it, as I have said, I could scarcely have sustained my thraldom.

Independently of the rigours of attendance, I have ever been haunted with a sense (perhaps a mere caprice) of incapacity for business. This, during my latter years, had increased to such a degree, that it was visible in all the lines of my countenance. My health and my good spirits flagged. I had perpetually a dread of some crisis, to which I should be found unequal. Besides my daylight servitude, I served over again all night in my sleep, and would awake with terrors of imaginary false entries, errors in my accounts, and the like. I was fifty years of age, and no prospect of emancipation presented itself. I had grown to my desk, as it were; and the wood had entered into my soul.

My fellows in the office would sometimes rally me upon the trouble legible in my countenance; but I did not know that it had raised the suspicions of any of my employers, when, on the 5th of last month, a day ever

to be remembered by me, L——, the junior partner in the firm, calling me on one side, directly taxed me with my bad looks, and frankly inquired the cause of them. So taxed, I honestly made confession of my infirmity, and added that I was afraid I should eventually be obliged to resign his service. He spoke some words of course to hearten me, and there the matter rested. A whole week I remained labouring under the impression that I had acted imprudently in my disclosure; that I had foolishly given a handle against myself, and had been anticipating my own dismissal. A week passed in this manner, the most anxious one, I verily believe, in my whole life, when on the evening of the 12th of April, just as I was about quitting my desk to go home (it might be about eight o'clock) I received an awful summons to attend the presence of the whole assembled firm in the formidable back parlour. I thought, now my time is surely come, I have done for myself, I am going to be told that they have no longer occasion for me. L——, I could see, smiled at the terror I was in, which was a little relief to me,—when to my utter astonishment B——, the eldest partner, began a formal harangue to me on the length of my services, my very meritorious conduct during the whole of the time (the deuce, thought I, how did he find out that? I protest I never had the confidence to think as much). He went on to descant on the expediency of retiring at a certain time of life (how my heart panted!) and asking me a few questions as to the amount of my own property, of which I have a little, ended with a proposal, to which his three partners nodded a grave assent, that I should

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1. **L——**: Lacy.
22. **B——**: Boldero.

accept from the house, which I had served so well, a pension for life to the amount of two-thirds of my accustomed salary—a magnificent offer! I do not know what I answered between surprise and gratitude, but it was understood that I accepted their proposal, and I was told that I was free from that hour to leave their service. I stammered out a bow, and at just ten minutes after eight I went home—for ever. This noble benefit —gratitude forbids me to conceal their names—I owe to the kindness of the most munificent firm in the world— the house of Boldero, Merryweather, Bosanquet, and Lacy.

*Esto perpetua!*

For the first day or two I felt stunned, overwhelmed. I could only apprehend my felicity; I was too confused to taste it sincerely. I wandered about, thinking I was happy, and knowing that I was not. I was in the condition of a prisoner in the old Bastile, suddenly let loose after a forty years' confinement. I could scarce trust myself with myself. It was like passing out of Time into Eternity—for it is a sort of Eternity for a man to have his Time all to himself. It seemed to me that I had more time on my hands than I could ever manage. From a poor man, poor in Time, I was suddenly lifted up into a vast revenue; I could see no end of my possessions; I wanted some steward, or judicious bailiff, to manage my estates in Time for me. And here let me caution persons growing old in active business, not lightly, nor without weighing their own resources, to forego their customary employment all at once, for there may be danger in it. I feel it by myself, but I know that my resources

13. **Esto perpetua:** may it live forever.

are sufficient; and now that those first giddy raptures have subsided, I have a quiet home-feeling of the blessedness of my condition. I am in no hurry. Having all holidays, I am as though I had none. If Time hung heavy upon me, I could walk it away; but I do *not* walk all day long, as I used to do in those old transient holidays, thirty miles a day, to make the most of them. If Time were troublesome, I could read it away, but I do *not* read in that violent measure, with which, having no Time my own but candle-light Time, I used to weary out my head and eyesight in bygone winters. I walk, read, or scribble (as now) just when the fit seizes me. I no longer hunt after pleasure; I let it come to me. I am like the man

> ——— That's born, and has his years come to him,
> In some green desert.

"Years," you will say! "what is this superannuated simpleton calculating upon? He has already told us, he is past fifty."

I have indeed lived nominally fifty years, but deduct out of them the hours which I have lived to other people, and not to myself, and you will find me still a young fellow. For *that* is the only true Time, which a man can properly call his own, that which he has all to himself; the rest, though in some sense he may be said to live it, is other people's time, not his. The remnant of my poor days, long or short, is at least multiplied for me threefold. My ten next years, if I stretch so far, will be as long as any preceding thirty. 'Tis a fair rule-of-three sum.

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15–16. **That's born,** etc.: somewhat altered from Middleton's "Mayor of Queenborough," I, i, 101–103.

Among the strange fantasies which beset me at the commencement of my freedom, and of which all traces are not yet gone, one was, that a vast tract of time had intervened since I quitted the Counting-House. I could not conceive of it as an affair of yesterday. The partners, and the clerks, with whom I had for so many years, and for so many hours in each day of the year, been closely associated—being suddenly removed from them —they seemed as dead to me. There is a fine passage, which may serve to illustrate this fancy, in a Tragedy by Sir Robert Howard, speaking of a friend's death:

> ———'T was but just now he went away;
> I have not since had time to shed a tear;
> And yet the distance does the same appear
> As if he had been a thousand years from me.
> Time takes no measure in Eternity.

To dissipate this awkward feeling, I have been fain to go among them once or twice since; to visit my old desk-fellows—my co-brethren of the quill—that I had left below in the state militant. Not all the kindness with which they received me could quite restore me to that pleasant familiarity, which I had heretofore enjoyed among them. We cracked some of our old jokes, but methought they went off but faintly. My old desk; the peg where I hung my hat, were appropriated to another. I knew it must be, but I could not take it kindly. D——l take me, if I did not feel some remorse—beast, if I had not,—at quitting my old compeers, the faithful partners of my toils for six-and-thirty years, that smoothed for me with their jokes and conundrums the

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10–16. **a Tragedy by Sir Robert Howard** (1626–1698): "The Vestal Virgin; or, The Roman Ladies," V, i.

ruggedness of my professional road. Had it been so rugged then after all? or was I a coward simply? Well, it is too late to repent; and I also know, that these suggestions are a common fallacy of the mind on such occasions. But my heart smote me. I had violently broken the bands betwixt us. It was at least not courteous. I shall be some time before I get quite reconciled to the separation. Farewell, old cronies, yet not for long, for again and again I will come among ye, if I shall have your leave. Farewell Ch——, dry, sarcastic, and friendly! Do——, mild, slow to move, and gentlemanly! Pl——, officious to do, and to volunteer, good services!—and thou, thou dreary pile, fit mansion for a Gresham or a Whittington of old, stately House of Merchants; with thy labyrinthine passages, and light-excluding, pent-up offices, where candles for one-half the year supplied the place of the sun's light; unhealthy contributor to my weal, stern fosterer of my living, farewell! In thee remain, and not in the obscure collection of some wandering bookseller, my "works!" There let them rest, as I do from my labours, piled on thy massy shelves, more MSS. in folio than ever Aquinas left, and full as useful! My mantle I bequeath among ye.

A fortnight has passed since the date of my first communication. At that period I was approaching to tranquillity, but had not reached it. I boasted of a calm indeed, but it was comparative only. Something of the first flutter was left; an unsettling sense of novelty; the dazzle to weak eyes of unaccustomed light. I missed my old chains, forsooth, as if they had been some necessary part of my apparel. I was a poor Carthusian, from

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10. **Ch——**: John Chambers.
11. **Do——**: Dodwell.
12. **Pl——**: Plumley (?).

strict cellular discipline suddenly by some revolution returned upon the world. I am now as if I had never been other than my own master. It is natural to me to go where I please, to do what I please. I find myself at eleven o'clock in the day in Bond Street, and it seems to me that I have been sauntering there at that very hour for years past. I digress into Soho, to explore a book-stall. Methinks I have been thirty years a collector. There is nothing strange nor new in it. I find myself before a fine picture in a morning. Was it ever otherwise? What is become of Fish Street Hill? Where is Fenchurch Street? Stones of old Mincing Lane, which I have worn with my daily pilgrimage for six-and-thirty years, to the footsteps of what toil-worn clerk are your everlasting flints now vocal? I indent the gayer flags of Pall Mall. It is 'Change time, and I am strangely among the Elgin marbles. It was no hyperbole when I ventured to compare the change in my condition to a passing into another world. Time stands still in a manner to me. I have lost all distinction of season. I do not know the day of the week, or of the month. Each day used to be individually felt by me in its reference to the foreign post days; in its distance from, or propinquity to, the next Sunday. I had my Wednesday feelings, my Saturday nights' sensations. The genius of each day was upon me distinctly during the whole of it, affecting my appetite, spirits, &c. The phantom of the next day, with the dreary five to follow, sate as a load upon my poor Sabbath recreations. What charm has washed that Ethiop white? What is gone of Black Monday? All days are the same. Sunday itself —that unfortunate failure of a holiday as it too often

16. **'Change time:** the business hours of the Royal Exchange.

proved, what with my sense of its fugitiveness, and overcare to get the greatest quantity of pleasure out of it—is melted down into a week-day. I can spare to go to church now, without grudging the huge cantle which it used to seem to cut out of the holiday. I have Time for everything. I can visit a sick friend. I can interrupt the man of much occupation when he is busiest. I can insult over him with an invitation to take a day's pleasure with me to Windsor this fine May-morning. It is Lucretian pleasure to behold the poor drudges, whom I have left behind in the world, carking and caring; like horses in a mill, drudging on in the same eternal round—and what is it all for? A man can never have too much Time to himself, nor too little to do. Had I a little son, I would christen him NOTHING-TO-DO; he should do nothing. Man, I verily believe, is out of his element as long as he is operative. I am altogether for the life contemplative. Will no kindly earthquake come and swallow up those accursed cotton mills? Take me that lumber of a desk there, and bowl it down

As low as to the fiends.

I am no longer * * * * * * , clerk to the Firm of &c. I am Retired Leisure. I am to be met with in trim gardens. I am already come to be known by my vacant

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4. **cantle:** fragment, or corner.

9–10. **Lucretian pleasure:** an allusion to Lucretius' "De Rerum Natura," II, in which the Roman poet speaks of the sweetness of the security of the land when beholding another amid the troubled waves of the sea.

21. **As low as to the fiends.** Cf. "Hamlet," II, ii, 517–519.

22. * * * * * *. In the *London Magazine* appeared "J——s D——n," and the article was signed "J. D." It is not known what name Lamb had in mind.

face and careless gesture, perambulating at no fixed pace, nor with any settled purpose. I walk about; not to and from. They tell me, a certain *cum dignitate* air, that has been buried so long with my other good parts, has begun to shoot forth in my person. I grow into gentility perceptibly. When I take up a newspaper, it is to read the state of the opera. *Opus operatum est.* I have done all that I came into this world to do. I have worked task-work, and have the rest of the day to myself.

3. **cum dignitate:** with dignity.
7. **Opus operatum est:** the task is finished.

# NOTES

## DEDICATION

The dedication appeared in the collected edition of "The Essays of Elia" (1823). In it Lamb is bespeaking a tolerant judgment for his essays; expressing the hope that they will be considered as the half-intimacies and rambling conversations of the after-dinner season, rather than the serious and learned contributions of some scholar.

9.—**events:** conclusions; outcomes. Cf. eventuate, eventually.

12.—**Timon.** "Timon of Athens," III, vi, 95.

13–14.—**the philosopher,** etc. Anaxarchus, a philosopher of Abdera, and friend of Alexander, offended the King of Cyprus, who had him pounded to death in a stone mortar. During the execution Anaxarchus cried, "Pound the body, for thou dost not pound the soul." Lamb says to his critics-to-be, in effect, "You but attack Elia, who is nobody; the real author you cannot reach, as he is hidden behind his pen-name."

## GENERAL NOTE

All of the essays included in this volume first appeared in the *London Magazine.* This periodical was first published in January, 1820, and continued for five years. Among its contributors were Keats, Procter (Barry Cornwall), Hazlitt, Hood, Lamb, and many other famous writers. De Quincey's "Opium Eater" and Carlyle's "Schiller" are among the famous pieces of literature that first appeared in the *London.* In 1823 Lamb collected into a volume the essays he wished to preserve. Ten years later a second series was published.

Lamb borrowed the name "Elia" from a clerk in the South-Sea House, with whom he had worked thirty years before. He

signed the name to the first of his contributions to the *London*, the essay called "Recollections of the South-Sea House" (August, 1820), never having consulted the rightful owner of the name with regard to the appropriation of it. "I went the other day," Lamb writes, "(not having seen him for over a year) to laugh over with him at my usurpation of his name, and found him, alas! no more than a name, for he died of consumption eleven months ago, and I knew it not. So the name has fairly devolved to me, I think, and 'tis all he has left me." The name was originally pronounced as though spelled "Ellia" (and Lamb occasionally so spelled it), but custom has decreed "Elia," with a long "e."

## I. The South-Sea House

(*London Magazine*, August, 1820)

Soon after leaving Christ's Hospital in 1789, Lamb obtained a position in the South-Sea House, where John Lamb, at this time twenty-six years of age, was deputy accountant. Charles retained his clerkship here until he was seventeen (1792), when he obtained the position with the East India Company. Lamb's peculiar power of dwelling upon and reproducing the past is here illustrated. The scenes and impressions of his boyhood are reproduced as clearly as though of yesterday.

**1**: 12.—**a desolation something like Balclutha's.** Comhall, the father of Fingal, took Balclutha, a town of the Britons on the Clyde, and destroyed it. The resulting desolation is described in Ossian's poem, "Carthon," from which Lamb's allusion is paraphrased. For information respecting James Macpherson's authorship of the epics he ascribed to Ossian, see Encyclopædia Britannica.

**2**: 6.—**the two first monarchs of the Brunswick dynasty:** George I (1714–27) and George II (1727–60).

**2**: 16.—**that famous Bubble.** The South-Sea Company was established in 1710 or 1711, ostensibly to trade with Spanish America, whose unknown wealth caused speculators to circulate the wildest tales regarding the profits to be derived. Finally, the company promised to assume part of the public debt in return for a monopoly of trade with the South American colonies. The shares of the company sold higher and higher; other bubble companies organized; until, at the height of a commercial hys-

teria that swept over all of England and much of the Continent, the crash came. The stock of the South-Sea Company fell rapidly in value, thousands of people found themselves ruined, and the English ministry went out in ignominy.

**3: 12–13.—the Titan size of Vaux's superhuman plot.** The Titans were giants, children of Heaven and Earth, who made war upon Olympus. **Vaux:** Guy Fawkes, author of the famous Gunpowder Plot of 1605. Lamb says that present-day frauds are as insignificant in comparison with the South-Sea Bubble as are modern conspiracies when compared with the gigantic plot of Fawkes.

**3: 30.—I have no skill in figuring.** Note Lamb's persistent determination to mystify the reader. He was, of course, a skilled accountant. Find other instances of this same whimsical misleading of his readers.

**4: 15.—Herculaneum:** a Roman city, which, together with Pompeii, was buried by Vesuvius in the year 79. Excavations begun in the eighteenth century, and still continuing, have uncovered many such objects as Lamb speaks of finding in the old South-Sea House, buried deep under dust, as Herculaneum was buried under ashes from the volcano.

**4: 26.—Humourists:** not as in the modern sense. This old word is one of the most interesting in our language. From the Latin *humor,* meaning "moisture," the word came to be applied to the fluids of the body, of which there were supposed to be four: blood, phlegm, black bile, and yellow bile. If these four humors were in proper ratio, the individual was thought to be normal. If there came to be an excess of any one of the humors, the individual was said to be of that particular temperament which the fluid was supposed to represent. Thus, a man with an excess of blood was said to be sanguine—full-blooded, energetic—whence our modern acceptation of the word sanguine, hopeful. In like manner, one who had an excess of phlegm was phlegmatic—heavy, dull; if black bile was in excess, he was said to be melancholy; if yellow bile predominated, he was said to be choleric—quick-tempered.

**5: 12.—Evans, Tame, Tipp,** and the others mentioned by Lamb, were real characters, employees of the South-Sea House, though Lamb would deliberately confuse the reader by the hint thrown out in lines 9–14 on page 13. Try to estimate the peculiar quality which this mystification gives to Lamb's writing.

**5: 13.—choleric complexion:** irascible temperament. See note

on humourists above. The word complexion here means temperament; literally, as derived from the Latin, a weaving together, or combining of the humors. The mixture that resulted was the man's temperament. See "Words and their Ways in English Speech," p. 31.

**5**: 26.—**Anderton's**: a coffee house in Fleet Street. For an account of coffee houses, see Professor Baker's edition of the "De Coverley Papers," p. 13.

**6**: 11.—Thomas **Pennant** published in 1790, "Some Account of London."

**6**: 14.—**Rosamond's Pond**: a small body of water in St. James's Park, filled up in 1770. "Fair Rosamond" (Jane Clifford) was mistress of Henry II.

**6**: 14–15.—**Mulberry-gardens**: so named from the mulberry trees planted by James I. The gardens are now included within the grounds of Buckingham Palace.

**6**: 15.—**the Conduit in Cheap**: leaden cistern in Cheapside, one of the famous old streets of London.

**6**: 17.—**Hogarth.** William Hogarth, 1697–1764, painted and engraved many pictures satirizing contemporary life. Lamb admired Hogarth's work immensely, and mentions him frequently throughout the "Essays of Elia." In the second series of the "Essays" he wrote "The Genius and Character of Hogarth," one of his most admired pieces of criticism. Old volumes of Hogarth's prints can be picked up in any second-hand book store.

**6**: 18–19.—**worthy descendants of those heroic confessors.** The Huguenots were again persecuted in France when Louis XIV revoked the Edict of Nantes in 1685. Many fled to England and sought refuge **in the sheltering obscurities of Hog-lane, and the vicinity of the Seven Dials**: London slums.

**7**: 17–18.—**unfortunate house of Derwentwater.** Because of their adherence to the Stuarts, two earls of this house were beheaded.

**8**: 10.—**Orphean lyre.** Orpheus was a mythical Greek poet and singer, to whom Apollo gave a lyre. With his beautiful music he enchanted beasts, trees, and rocks, so that they followed after him.

**8**: 14–15.—Again Lamb's attempt to mystify the reader. Having inserted the parenthetical matter, he then appends the footnote. The occupant of the rooms was his brother John.

**8**:21.—**Lord Midas**: the king of Phrygia, whose touch turned

everything to gold. Acting as judge between Pan, the god of shepherds, who played upon the flute, and Apollo, the god of music, who played the lyre, Midas declared Pan to be the better musician. Apollo thereupon changed his ears into those of an ass. Lamb's witticism in saying "they praised his ear" is apparent, as is the inference with regard to Tipp's ability as a musical critic.

**11: 6–7.—Chatham and Shelburne,** etc. See any school history of the United States for brief accounts of these men, whose names are associated with our struggle for independence.

**11: 16.—the Plumers of Hertfordshire.** Lamb had visited the Plumer mansion during the life of his grandmother Field, who was for fifty years housekeeper of the mansion in Blakesware. See the essay, "Dream Children."

**12: 10.—Arcadian.** Arcadia, in southern Greece, was the shepherd country of the old poets, where all was supposed to be peace and happiness.

**12: 11.—Arden:** the forest of Arden, where Shakespeare's play "As You Like It" is laid. For the song of Amiens, see "As You Like It," II, vii, 174.

**13: 12.—Henry Pimpernel.** See Shakespeare's "Taming of the Shrew," Ind, II, 95. These men are named as never having existed.

## II. Christ's Hospital Five-and-Thirty Years Ago

(*London Magazine*, November, 1820)

**Mr. Lamb's "Works,"** referred to in line 1, is the edition of 1818 (Messrs. Olliers) in which Lamb reprinted "Recollections of Christ's Hospital," originally published in the *Gentleman's Magazine*, 1813. This essay was a eulogy of the old school, which Lamb entered as a boy of eight.

Christ's Hospital, so called from one of the original meanings of the word hospital (Latin, *hospes*, guest; hospital, a place of hospitality for those in need of shelter), was founded by King Edward VI as a school for "the maintenance and education of a certain number of poor children born of citizens of London." Originally the school site in Newgate Street was the monastery of the Franciscans (Gray Friars), whose revenues were confiscated in the early part of Edward's reign. The school occupied the site till 1902, when it was removed to Sussex.

This "admirable charity" enrolled in Lamb's time about seven hundred boys. All were dressed, as now, in the wide-skirted blue gown, or coat, of Tudor times, with yellow vest, white duck knee-breeches, yellow stockings, and leather belt. They usually went hatless. For other material regarding Christ's, see L. Hunt's "Autobiography."

**14:** 2.—**my old school.** It is Elia who is writing, Lamb being spoken of in the third person. In the early part of the essay Elia takes the character and voices the opinions of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Lamb's contemporary at Christ's Hospital. The assumption of this character is not sustained, however, for later in the essay Lamb speaks of Coleridge in the third person (page 30, line 5).

**14:** 17.—**present worthy sub-treasurer:** Randall Norris. He is the **R. N.** referred to in the postscript to "The Old Benchers of the Inner Temple."

**15:** 22.—**good old relative.** See Lamb's description of this old lady in the essay "My Relations," p. 71, line 13. Then compare the following quotation from a letter to Coleridge written in 1797: "My poor old aunt, whom you have seen, the kindest, goodest creature to me when I was at school; who used to toddle there to bring me good things, when I, schoolboy like, only despised her for it, and used to be ashamed to see her come and sit herself down on the old coal-hole steps as you went into the grammar school, and open her apron, and bring out her bason, with some nice thing she had caused to be saved for me."

**17:** 28.—**the Lions in the Tower.** The Blue-coat boys had time out of mind enjoyed the privilege of free admission to the menagerie formerly located near the western gate of the Tower of London.

**18:** 28.—**Nero** (37–68 A.D.): Roman emperor noted for his tyrannical cruelty. Of him it was said that he lighted his gardens by burning Christians soaked in oil, and that he set Rome on fire for the sake of seeing it burn, playing his violin while watching the conflagration.

**19:** 9.—**Caligula's minion.** Caligula (12–41 A.D.) was a Roman emperor of like character to Nero. He caused his favorite horse, for which he had provided a marble stable beautifully adorned, to be made consul. He afterwards worshiped the horse as a god.

**20:** 3.—**grand paintings "by Verrio."** "For the Christ's Hospital boy feels he is no charity-boy; he feels it in the antiquity

and regality of the foundation to which he belongs; . . . in his stately dining-hall, hung round with pictures, by Verrio, Lely, and others, one of them surpassing in size and grandeur almost any other in the kingdom; . . . representing James the Second on his throne, surrounded by his courtiers (all curious portraits), receiving the mathematical pupils at their annual presentation, a custom still kept up on New Year's Day at Court."—"Recollections of Christ's Hospital." The custom has been discontinued since Lamb wrote the above.

**20**: 8.—**harpies:** in classical mythology, birds with brazen claws and faces of maidens. They were spoilers of feasts, and gluttonous eaters. (See Virgil's "Æneid," III.)

**20**: 11.—**L. has recorded the repugnance of the school to gags.** "A boy would have blushed, as at the exposure of some heinous immorality, to have been detected eating that forbidden portion of his allowance of animal food, the whole of which, while he was in health, was little more than sufficient to allay his hunger."—"Recollections of Christ's Hospital."

**22**: 25.—**Bedlam cells.** Bedlam is a corruption of Bethlehem in the name of the ancient priory, St. Mary of Bethlehem, in London. This became a hospital, then an asylum for the insane; hence the meaning attached to the word bedlam to-day. Bedlam cells are little mad-house cells.

**23**: Footnote.—**John Howard** (1726–1790): philanthropist and prison reformer. **saving the reverence due to Holy Paul:** St. Paul's cathedral, where the statue of Howard is placed.

**24**: 2-3.—**the awful presence of the steward.** The steward, in Lamb's time, had charge of the discipline of the school, as well as control of provisions, etc.

**24**: 21.—**San Benito:** the garb "of the same cut as that worn by the members of the Order of St. Benedict," in which heretics were clad when brought before the Spanish Inquisition. The dress was a yellow gown with grotesque figures painted upon it.

**25**: 3.—**Rev. James Boyer.**—In the "Recollections" Lamb speaks of him as "our excellent upper grammar-master," and bears testimony to the "unwearied assiduity with which he attended to the particular improvement of each of us." He speaks, however, of his free use of the rod. Boyer, as an excellent teacher, but a severe disciplinarian, is spoken of in much the same vein by Coleridge ("Biographia Literaria," I, 145, "Table Talk," 85), and by Leigh Hunt ("Autobiography," III).

**25**: 4.—**Rev. Matthew Field.** See Leigh Hunt's "Autobiography," III.

**25**: 29.—**Peter Wilkins**: "The Life and Adventures of Peter Wilkins," a story of shipwreck and adventure by Robert Paltock, published about 1750.

**26**: 10.—**Rousseau and John Locke.** Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712–1778), a famous French philosopher, and John Locke (1632–1704), an English philosopher, conceived methods of education which permitted the student to work along the lines of least resistance.

**26**: 23.—**Phædrus**: a freedman of the Emperor Augustus, first century, who translated Æsop's "Fables" into Latin verse.

**26**: 30.—**Helots**: Spartan bondmen, who were not accorded the severe training which the young Spartans had to endure. Drunken Helots were exhibited at public feasts in order to inspire in the Spartan youths a disgust for drunkenness.

**27**: 4.—**Xenophon** (about 435 B.C.): Greek soldier and historian. **Plato** (428–347 B.C.): famous Greek philosopher, pupil of Socrates.

**27**: 5.—**Samite**: Pythagoras, the Greek philosopher of Samos, who made his pupils keep silence till they had listened to his lectures for five years. He taught the transmigration of souls. (Cf. "Merchant of Venice," IV, i, 130–138.)

**27**: 6.—**our little Goshen.** Goshen was the little valley of peace and plenty to which Joseph sent his father and brothers at the time of the famine in Egypt. At the time of the plagues it was untroubled. (See Genesis, xlv, 10; Exodus, viii, 22, etc.)

**28**: 2–5.—For Boyer's **thin jests** see Horace's (Quintus Horatius Flaccus) "Satires," I, vii, 33, where he puns on the word *rex*, treating it as a proper name and as the word for king. The other references may be found in Terence's "Andrea," V, ii, 16, and in his "Adelphi," III, iii, 74.

**30**: 20–21.—**anti-socialities of their predecessors.** Boyer and Field were social opposites, having nothing in common. Dr. Trollope and Stevens, who succeeded them, were, in sharp contrast, close companions.

**30**: 28.—**fasces**: the emblem of authority carried by the lictors before the Roman magistrates. The emblem was a bundle of rods, sometimes with an ax inserted, with which malefactors were punished. Lamb is referring to the birch rod as being the emblem of the schoolmaster's authority.

**31**: 13.—**against Sharpe**: opposed to the views of Granville Sharpe (1734–1818), who wrote "Remarks on the Use of the Definite Article in the Greek Testament." Sharpe is famous not for his work in philology, however, but for his work as an abolitionist.

**31**: 16.—**John Jewell** (1522–1571) and **Richard Hooker** (1554?–1600) were both learned but modest divines of the Church of England. Jewell has been called "The Father of English Protestantism."

**32**: 3–4.—Cf. the lines from Matthew Prior's "Carmen Sæculare":

> "Finding some of Stuart's race
> Unhappy, pass their annals by."

Lamb substitutes "Edward" for "Stuart" as he is referring to the boys of Christ's Hospital, founded by Edward VI.

**32**: 5.—**Come back into memory.** This is one of the famous passages in literature referring to Coleridge. Observe that, having written in the person of Coleridge up to page 30, line 4, Elia now seems to write in his own person, speaking of Coleridge in the third, instead of in the first person. The whole tends to produce the feeling of uncertainty and mystification for which Lamb was always striving.

**32**: 12.—**Mirandula.** Mirandola, a brilliant young Italian of the fifteenth century, was famed for his knowledge of Plato and the Greek philosophers. Note the aptness of Lamb's comparison. **Jamblichus** and **Plotinus** were Greek philosophers of about the fourth century after Christ, who helped to form Coleridge's philosophical and religious ideas.

**32**: 16.—**Homer** (about 850 B.C.), the chief epic, and **Pindar** (about 522–442 B.C.), the chief lyric poet of Greece.

**32**: 18.—"**wit-combats.**" See Thomas Fuller's "Worthies of England" for the account of a wit-combat between Shakespeare and Ben Jonson. The quotation following is a paraphrase from the same.

**32**: 20.—**C. V. le G——**: Charles Valentine Le Grice. He and his brother Samuel, mentioned on page 33, line 16, were prominent members of the school in Lamb's day. Charles went into the church, Samuel into the army. As boys and as men, these two were warm friends of Lamb's, Samuel being with Lamb for several days at the time Mary Lamb killed her mother. Both the brothers were well known as wits.

**33:** 8.—**Nireus formosus.** Nireus was the handsomest Greek at the siege of Troy, with the exception of Achilles. ("Iliad," II, 673.)

## III. The Two Races of Men

(*London Magazine*, December, 1820)

Although this essay reads like an extravagant flight of fancy, it was founded, like most of the others, on the experience and intercourse of Lamb's own life. Ralph Bigod, the prince of borrowers, Lamb knew while a writer for the *Albion;* while in the references to Coleridge, Lamb is but paying back his friend for numerous depredations about which he had actually complained in person and by letter. In one letter to Coleridge he writes: "You never come but you take away some folio that is part of my existence."

**34:** 17.—**Alcibiades** (450?–404 B.C.): Athenian orator, general, intriguer. He was a pupil of Socrates, who strove to keep him sober-minded and unspoiled; but, idolized by the Athenians because of his beauty of person and charm of manner, he became a profligate and spendthrift. **Falstaff** is a character in Shakespeare's plays, "King Henry IV" and "The Merry Wives of Windsor." He is a fat, jolly fellow of impecunious habits, borrows of his friends, and is always in debt. Cf. "II Henry IV," I, ii, 251, and II, i. **Sir Richard Steele** (1672–1729): founder and fellow-editor with Addison of the *Spectator.* His financial difficulties are well known. Macaulay in his "Essay on Addison" tells of his proclivity for borrowing.

**34:** 18.—**Brinsley:** the name by which Lamb usually speaks of Richard Brinsley Sheridan (1751–1816), the author of "The Rivals" and "The School for Scandal." Brilliant and admired in public life, in his private life he was dissipated and improvident, and a notorious borrower.

**35:** 6.—**beyond Tooke:** reducing the language to a simplicity beyond that claimed for it by Horne Tooke, who maintained that all words originated from objects of perception.

**35:** 21.—**Candlemas,** February 2d, the feast-day celebrating the purification of the virgin, is in Scotland one of the quarter days. **Feast of Holy Michael,** or Michaelmas Day, September 29th, is one of the quarter days in England. The quarter, or term, days are days appointed for payments of rent, taxes, interest, etc.

**36**: 1.—**which, to that gentle warmth,** etc. The sun and the wind contended for the cloak of the traveller. The violent north wind but made the traveller hug his cloak the closer; while the gentle rays of the warm sun caused him to lay it aside. (Æsop's "Fables.")

**36**: 16.—**Ralph Bigod**: John Fenwick, editor, a long-time friend of Lamb's. See essay, "The Praise of Chimney Sweepers."

**37**: 6.—**some Alexander**: Alexander the Great (356–323 B.C.), King of Macedonia. Having conquered the known world, he is said to have "wept for other worlds to conquer."

**39**: 15–16.—**Comberbatch.** When Coleridge ran away from the university during his second year of residence, he enlisted in the Light Dragoons under the name of Silas Tomkyn Comberbach. Under this name, though carelessly misspelled, Lamb alludes to his friend.

**39**: 20–21.—**Guildhall giants**: Gog and Magog, two huge wooden giants standing under the west window of Guildhall, the old council hall of London. The original figures, destroyed in the great fire of 1666, were replaced in 1708.

**39**: 22.—**Opera Bonaventuræ**: the works of Giovanni di Fidenza (1221–1274), canonized as St. Bonaventura. Through the influence of St. Francis of Assisi he became a monk of the Franciscan order, first securing his education at the University of Paris. He was made a cardinal by Pope Gregory X. In 1482 he was canonized. He wrote seven folio volumes, most of the work being sermons. His style is colored with the mysticism to the study of which he devoted a large part of his life, and breathes throughout the sweetness, tenderness, and purity that characterized the man and won for him the title of "The Seraphic Doctor." The style and matter of his writings made a deep impression upon Lamb.

**39**: 24–25.—**Bellarmine** (1524–1621) and **Holy Thomas,** St. Thomas Aquinas (1225?–1274), were Italian theologians.

**40**: 9.—**Browne on Urn Burial.** Lamb's admiration for the work of Sir Thomas Browne (1605–1682) is shown throughout the essays. More than the work of any other author the "Hydriotaphia" (Urn Burial) and "Religio Medici" (The Religion of a Physician) affected Lamb's style, his manner of thinking, and his standards of criticism. Browne was educated at Winchester School and Oxford. He afterwards travelled on the Continent, receiving his degree in medicine at the University of Leyden,

Holland, in 1633. He wrote "Religio Medici" while waiting for practice at Halifax, England. "Urn Burial," a commentary on the vanity of life, based on the discovery of certain burial urns in Norfolk, was written in 1658. The style of both these books is rhythmic and harmonious—prose poetry, lacking only meter to make it verse.

**40:17.—Priam's refuse sons:** the neglected sons of Priam. When Priam, King of Troy, went to beg the body of his favorite Hector from Achilles, who had slain him, he spoke slightingly of his remaining nine sons. ("Iliad," XXIV.)

**40:18–19.—Anatomy of Melancholy:** a ponderous volume by Robert Burton (1577–1640), in which melancholy is treated from nearly every standpoint, physical as well as mental. Dr. Johnson said it was the only book that ever took him out of bed two hours sooner than he wished to rise. Lamb's admiration of the work was quite as strongly expressed. The book is a storehouse of quotation, authorities being cited from every realm of literature, and sometimes at great length. Its quaint style and wide range of allusion made it one of Lamb's favorite volumes. Of Burton himself little is known. He was graduated from Oxford in 1614, was at once made minister of two adjoining parishes near Oxford, and retained these livings until he died. Despite the melancholy turn of his mind, he is said to have been a man of attractive personality, and a jolly companion.

**40:19–20.—Complete Angler:** a famous book on fishing by Izaak Walton (1593–1683). It is discursive in character, yet coherent; conversational in its tone, and yet imparting much real information about the avocation to which Walton was so devoted. In addition to this work, Walton wrote a number of biographies, among them lives of Wotton, Donne, Hooker, and Herbert.

**40:21.—John Buncle:** a romance by Thomas Amory, a favorite of Lamb's, and several times mentioned in the essays. The **widower volume** is so called from its likeness to Buncle, who married and lost upward of a half-dozen wives, remaining, after the loss of one of them, four days with **"eyes closed."**

**41:5.—deodands.** In old English law a deodand was a personal chattel that had been instrumental in causing the death of a person, and was, therefore, forfeited to the crown for pious uses.

**41:14–15.—Margaret Newcastle** (1625–1673): Margaret Lucas,

second wife of William Cavendish, Duke of Newcastle. She wrote no fewer than twenty-six plays, besides an exhaustive life of her husband, volumes of poetry, etc. The Duke wrote several plays and a treatise on horsemanship. The union of these two remarkable and eccentric persons is noted for the exaggerated idea each had of the other's literary abilities. Walpole speaks of the Duchess as a "fertile pedant with an unbounded passion for scribbling." She was ingenious and well read, but lacking in genuine learning and real literary taste. The reason for her strong appeal to Lamb is difficult to determine.

**42**:6.—**Fulke Greville, Lord Brooke** (1554–1628): playwright and poet. Selections from "Alaham" and "Mustapha," two of his tragedies, are contained in Lamb's "Specimens of English Dramatic Poets." Lamb says, "Whether we look into his plays, or his most passionate love-poems, we shall find all frozen and made rigid with intellect." For this reason he felt that Lord Brooke naturally would not appeal to a French woman.

**42**:9.—**Zimmermann on Solitude:** a book which Lamb professed greatly to admire. Johann Georg von Zimmermann (1728–1795) was a Swiss physician, philosopher, and moralist, at one time connected with the court of Frederick the Great. His principal work, "On Solitude," was translated into all the European languages.

## IV. New Year's Eve

(*London Magazine*, January, 1821)

"It was probably this paper, together with that on 'Witches and Other Night Fears,' which so shocked the moral sense of Southey, and led to his lamenting publicly, in the pages of the *Quarterly*, the 'absence of a sounder religious feeling' in the 'Essays of Elia.' The melancholy scepticism of its strain would appear to have struck others at the time. A graceful and tenderly remonstrative copy of verses, suggested by it, appeared in the *London Magazine* for August 1821, signed 'Olen.' Lamb noticed them in a letter to his publisher, Mr. Taylor, of July 30th: 'You will do me injustice if you do not convey to the writer of these beautiful lines, which I here return to you, my sense of the extreme kindness which dictates them. Poor Elia (call him Ellia) does not pretend to so very clear revelations of a future state of being as 'Olen' seems gifted with. He stumbles about

dark mountains at best; but he knows at least how to be thankful for this life, and is too thankful, indeed, for certain relationships lent him here, not to tremble for a possible resumption of the gift.'"—*Canon Ainger.* For other interesting matter regarding this singular and beautiful essay, see Ainger's "Life of Lamb," 130–131; and for matter relating to the subsequent controversy with Southey, see the whole of the chapter (VII).

**44**:25.—**Alice W——n.** Lamb's Key fills out the name as "Winterton," but even this would not help us, such is Lamb's love of mystification, did we not know that the reference is to Ann Simmons, Lamb's early love, who married Bartrum, a wealthy London pawnbroker. The references to her are frequent; she is the heroine of "Rosamund Gray," is the "Anna" referred to in the "Sonnets," and is several times mentioned in the "Essays." (See "Dream Children," and also Introduction, p. xx.)

**48**:4ff.—**My household gods,** etc. Observe the force of Lamb's way of putting it. In a letter to Coleridge, written soon after moving to No. 4 Inner Temple, he said: "Alas! the household gods are slow to come in a new mansion. They are in their infancy to me; I do not feel them yet."

**48**:6.—**Lavinian shores:** new lands. Cf. Virgil's "Æneid," I, 2–3. After the sack of Troy, Æneas was driven by the gods to seek the Lavinian shores (the shores of Italy) and found a city.

**49**:9.—**Phœbus's sickly sister:** Diana, the moon, often spoken of as the pale sister of Phœbus Apollo, the sun-god.

**49**:11.—**Persian:** Zoroaster, who founded the sun-worship of Persia.

**49**:20.—**Friar John:** Rabelais's profane monk in the romance "Gargantua." Whenever he slew an enemy with his favorite weapon, the staff of a cross, he would cry, "I deliver thee to all the devils in hell."

**50**:18.—**Mr. Cotton,** Charles (1630–1687). Although a poet, Cotton is best remembered as a fisherman, a friend of Izaak Walton's, to whose "Complete Angler" he made some additions. He translated Montaigne's "Essays."

**50**:24.—**Janus:** the two-faced Latin god, worshiped as the sun and the moon. He was also the god of beginnings—hence the first month of the year is named for him—and was the guardian god of gates and doors.

**52**: 20.—**Helicon:** the mountain range in western Bœotia, in

Greece, from whose snow-capped summits flowed the fountains of the Muses. **genuine Helicon,** therefore, means real poetry.

## V. A Chapter on Ears

(*London Magazine,* March, 1821)

Talfourd says: "Lamb was entirely destitute of what is commonly called 'a taste for music.' A few old tunes ran in his head. . . . But . . . usually music only confused him, and an opera . . . was to him a maze of sound in which he almost lost his wits." Several of Lamb's poems reflect this constitutional aversion to music, notably the lines to Miss Clara Novello, "The Gods have made me most unmusical." Lamb spoke of his own deficiency so often that one is tempted to believe it one of the contraries of his nature which he affected in order to rouse antagonism.

**53**:11–12.—**to incur, with Defoe, that hideous disfigurement.** Daniel Defoe (1661?–1731), famous as the author of "Robinson Crusoe" and "Captain Singleton," was also the author of many church and political pamphlets. Because of one of these, "The Shortest Way with Dissenters," he was sentenced to the pillory for three days, besides being fined and imprisoned. That his ears were actually cut off, as Lamb evidently believes, and as Pope intimates in his lines, "Earless on high stood unabashed Defoe," from which Lamb quotes (line 14), has been disproved.

**57**:18–19.—**and strain ideas to keep pace with it.** This seems to be the basis of Lamb's quarrel with music, for the thought is several times repeated. A musical idea is something Lamb cannot grasp; that music should embody a thought he cannot conceive. The fact that there is, however, the representation of a thought lying beneath the sounds, confuses him; and the vain effort to follow the thought strains his attention to the breaking point.

**59**:7–8.—**my good Catholic friend Nov——:** Vincent Novello (1781–1861), musical critic, composer, and organist. He was the father of Miss Clara Novello, mentioned above, and of Mrs. Cowden Clarke, the Shakespearean editor. His son, James, founded the musical publishing house still in existence.

**60**:5.—**dolphin-seated, ride those Arions.** Mythology says that Arion was a poet and musician, who, having won costly prizes in a musical contest in Sicily, was returning home to Lesbos by water. To save his life from the covetous sailors he threw him-

self into the sea, whereupon the dolphins, who had been drawn by his music, took him upon their backs safely to shore. See the essay, "Witches and Other Night Fears," page 127, line 25ff.

**60**:5–6.—**Haydn,** Joseph (1732–1809); **Mozart,** Wolfgang Amadeus (1756–1791); **Bach,** Johann Sebastian (1685–1750); **Beethoven,** Ludwig von (1770–1827): four of the greatest names from the long list of German-Austrian composers. Beethoven is usually conceded to be the greatest of all composers. If he is, the others rank not far behind him.

**60**:17.—**malleus hereticorum:** hammer of the heretics. Johann Faber (about 1500) was so called from his vigorous opposition to the Reformation.

**61**:5ff.—This postscript was appended to the original essay in the *London Magazine,* but was omitted from the collected edition of 1823. It indicates so clearly the informal, colloquial character of the essays, that it has been retained here.

## VI. A Quakers' Meeting

(*London Magazine,* April, 1821)

In speaking of Lamb's liking for Quaker dress and customs, Ainger says the sympathy is "so marked that it is difficult to believe it was not inherited, and that on one or other side of his parentage he had not relations with the Society of Friends." Lamb himself says, "I love Quaker ways, and Quaker worship. I venerate Quaker principles" ("Imperfect Sympathies," page 97); and his correspondence and literary work are full of allusions to the sect. Bernard Barton, the Quaker poet, possessed an immediate attraction for Lamb, and to him some of Lamb's most interesting letters were written. "Hester," to whom Lamb wrote his beautiful poem, "When maidens such as Hester die," was a Quakeress. Lamb's own appearance, "dressed in clerkly black," partook of the Quaker simplicity, as usually did his demeanor.

**63**:13.—**Richard Fleckno,** author of this apostrophe to Silence, was an Irish poet and dramatist of the seventeenth century. Lamb quotes from him in his "Specimens."

**64**:8.—**little-faithed self-mistrusting Ulysses.** During Ulysses's wanderings after the fall of Troy (as told in Homer's "Odyssey," XII), he passed by the island where the sirens dwelt. These sea-maidens had such power of song that they drew upon the rocks the ships of all sailors who heard them. Ulysses, knowing this,

filled the ears of his sailors with wax, and caused himself to be bound to the mast. Thus he heard the song of the sirens, but incurred none of the danger.

**65**:8.—**The Carthusian.** This monastic order, founded in 1086, was bound to the use of the poorest clothing, the most meager fare, and to a life of unbroken solitude. Speech was forbidden, save when absolutely necessary.

**65**:13.—**(if that be probable).** There are few better illustrations in the essays of Lamb's irrepressible inclination for sly and subtle humor. The essay is written in the most sober vein, reverential in places, despite which there must be dropped by the way this sly hit at woman's proverbial loquacity.

**66**:9–10.—**How reverend is the view,** etc. "A good example of Lamb's habit of constructing a quotation out of his general recollection of a passage. The lines he had in his mind are from Congreve's 'Mourning Bride,' II, 1:

> 'How reverend is the face of this tall pile,
> Whose ancient pillars rear their marble heads
> To bear aloft its arched and ponderous roof,
> By its own weight made steadfast and immovable,
> Looking tranquillity.'"

—*Ainger.*

**66**:19–20.—**Fox and Dewesbury.** George Fox (1624–1690) was the founder of the Society of Friends (Quakers). He suffered imprisonment, with many hardships, but adhered to his faith and succeeded in effecting an organization. William **Dewesbury** was one of his early supporters.

**67**: 1–2.—**the out-cast and off-scouring of church and presbytery.** The Quakers were scorned, cast out, and persecuted, not only by the English Church but by the dissenting Presbyterians, then in the ascendancy. Thus they **sate betwixt the fires of two persecutions.**

**67**:7.—**Penn,** William (1644–1715), founded the Quaker settlements in America, notably Philadelphia. He also suffered imprisonment for certain pamphlets attacking the church and clergy.

**67**:21–22.—**James Naylor** (1618–1660). This Yorkshire Quaker became a fanatic, and, imagining he was the Christ, rode naked into Bristol. Upon being tortured he recanted, but remained true to his Quaker principles.

**68**:8.—**John Woolman** (1720–1772): a New Jersey tailor,

humble, illiterate, but the author of a work giving his own experiences as a minister of Christ which has come to be regarded as classic. Lamb was exceedingly fond of the book, and often recommended it to his friends.

**70:1.—faster than the Loves fled the face of Dis at Enna.** Dives (Dis), or Pluto, the god of the lower world, had been promised Proserpina for his wife; but her mother, Ceres, was unwilling. Pluto came upon Proserpina in the Vale of Enna, in Asia, and bore her off to Hades, the Cupids who were attending her fleeing in dismay.

**70:8.—the milder caverns of Trophonius.** Trophonius, the builder of the temple at Delphi, was worshiped, after his death, as a hero, and had an oracle in a cave in Bœotia. From this cavern those who had gone to consult the oracle were said to return pale and awe-struck. Coventry Patmore uses the word in describing the face of the earth after a snow-fall:

"... and to trace
The sense of the Trophonian pallor on her face."

## VII. My Relations

(*London Magazine*, June, 1821)

"In these two successive essays, and in that on the 'Benchers of the Inner Temple,' Lamb draws portraits of singular interest to us, of his father, aunt, brother, and sister—all his near relations with one exception. The mother's name never occurs in letter or published writing after the first bitterness of the calamity of September, 1796, had passed away. This was doubtless out of consideration for the feelings of his sister. Very noticeable is the frankness with which he describes the less agreeable side of the character of his brother John, who was still living, and apparently on quite friendly terms with Charles and Mary."—*Ainger.*

**71:13–16.—I had an aunt:** a sister of Lamb's father. She lived with the family and was said to contribute her small annuity to the common fund. It is of her that Lamb writes in the essay on "Christ's Hospital" (see note on page 248), and to her memory was addressed the poem, "Written on the Day of My Aunt's Funeral."

**71:21.—Thomas à Kempis** (1380–1471): a German monk, the reputed author of "De Imitatione Christi" (Of the Imitation of Christ), a devotional work known in nearly every language.

**72**:9.—**it was in the infancy of that heresy.** Lamb is referring to the Unitarian faith, which began to establish itself in England early in the eighteenth century. Unitarianism denies belief in the divinity of Jesus, but professes belief in one God. Coleridge's father was a Unitarian minister, and Coleridge himself, in early life, preached in Unitarian **chapels,** as the houses of worship of dissenting bodies were called in distinction to the churches of the Church of England.

**72**:27–28.—**Brother, or sister, I never had any.** As Ainger points out, Lamb here curiously blends fact and fiction. Mary and John Lamb, his sister and brother, he converts into cousins, Bridget and James Elia. But in addition to these two and Charles himself, four other children had been born, none of whom survived early childhood. Two sisters, both of whom died in infancy, had been named Elizabeth, after their mother.

**73**:12.—**James is an inexplicable cousin.** "The mixture of the man of the world, dilettante, and sentimentalist—not an infrequent combination—is here described with graphic power. All that we know of John Lamb, the 'broad, burly, jovial,' living his bachelor-life in chambers at the old Sea House, is supported and confirmed by this passage."—*Ainger.* With regard to John Lamb's sensibility to suffering in dumb animals, see Charles's letter to Crabb Robinson, written in 1810, vol. i, p. 323, of Ainger's edition of the "Letters." For further reference to John Lamb, see the Introduction, pp. xix–xxi.

**73**:14ff.—**the pen of Yorick,** etc. Laurence Sterne (1713–1768) tells the story of "Tristram Shandy" in the first person under the name of Yorick. In the story Yorick is a clergyman who claims descent from the Yorick of Shakespeare's "Hamlet." His characterizations are broad, his humor is keen, and Tristram Shandy, as he describes him, has certain qualities to be found in J. E.

**74**:24.—**Charles of Sweden** (1682–1718). Charles XII, the great heroic figure of the Swedish wars, was noted for his reckless bravery and his carelessness of all hardships. He was killed in battle in Norway.

**74**:30–31.—**Cham of Tartary:** an Oriental despot. The name was symbolical, in Elizabethan times, for pure tyranny.

**75**:12.—**John Murray's street:** Albemarle Street, on which was situated the publishing house of John Murray, founder of the *Quarterly Review.*

**77**:21.—**Raphael:** Raffaello Sanzio d'Urbino (1483–1520), an Italian artist, whose name has come to be the epitome of a certain excellence in art. Mozart, for instance, is called the "Raphael of Music," and there are "Flemish Raphaels" and "French Raphaels" among the painters of those respective countries. He is famous for his Madonnas, among which are "The Sistine Madonna" and "The Madonna of the Chair."

**79**:8–9.—**eels skinned alive.** In 1810 John Lamb "wrote a book about humanity," which he wished his brother Charles to see favorably reviewed. In sending the book to Crabb Robinson for review Charles Lamb writes: "Don't show it to Mrs. Collier for she makes excellent eel soup, and the leading points of the book are directed against that very process."

## VIII. Mackery End, in Hertfordshire

(*London Magazine*, July, 1821)

This intimate piece of autobiography is of peculiar interest because it touches on the relations of brother and sister—the brother who gave up everything for a distressed and afflicted sister, and the sister who was, all accounts agreeing, so remarkable and so individual a character that perhaps her like does not exist in the annals of literature. Ainger says that this essay shows us "the brighter and happier intervals" of their "life of dual loneliness," without which that life "could hardly have been borne for those eight-and-thirty years. In 1805, during one of Mary Lamb's periodical attacks of mania, and consequent absences from home, Charles writes: 'I am a fool bereft of her coöperation. I am used to look up to her in the least and the biggest perplexities. . . . She is older, wiser, and better than I am; and all my wretched imperfections I cover to myself by thinking on her goodness.' Compare also the sonnet written by Charles, in one of his 'lucid intervals' when himself in confinement in 1796, ending with the words:

> '. . . the mighty debt of love I owe,
> Mary, to thee, my sister and my friend.'"

**84**:16.—**The oldest thing I remember is Mackery End.** "The place, now further contracted into 'Mackrye End,' is about a mile and a half from Wheathampstead, on the Luton Branch of the Great Northern Railway." The house itself is "a venerable old

Jacobean mansion, and close to it a whitish farmhouse, which is the one occupied by Lamb's relatives, the Gladmans." Ainger calls attention to the "almost unique beauty of this prose idyll."

**84**:23–25.—**I wish that I could throw into a heap the remainder of our joint existences, that we might share them in equal division.** There is an almost bitter pathos in this wish that Lamb and his sister might die together as they lived together, when we recall that Mary survived Charles thirteen years, nearly the whole of that time being spent in a private asylum.

## IX. Imperfect Sympathies

(*London Magazine*, August, 1821)

The original title of this essay was "Jews, Quakers, Scotchmen, and Other Imperfect Sympathies." The frankness with which Lamb here expresses himself must have cost him the good will of some of his friends; and some writers have affirmed that the caustic criticism of Lamb to which Carlyle gave vent in his "Reminiscences" is directly traceable to a dislike bred by Elia's frank criticism of the Scots. While this seems hardly possible, it is true, nevertheless, that Carlyle illustrated in his criticism the very Scotch traits which Elia so cleverly and good-naturedly ridicules in this essay.

**91**:1ff.—This paragraph is typical of Lamb, and will repay close study. Note how each new sentence adds a new figure, until, having piled figure on figure, he leaves the thought with you struck through with light from almost every conceivable angle of vision. The sentences are short, crisp, and clear, few of them presenting a new thought, but for the most part amplifying an idea already presented.

**92**:9.—**His Minerva is born in panoply.** Minerva (Pallas Athena), the goddess of wisdom, is said to have sprung full-armed from the brain of Jupiter. So the ideas of the Scotchman seem to spring full-grown from his mind.

**94**:1.—**Leonardo da Vinci** (1452–1519): one of the great names of Italy. Leonardo was painter, architect, sculptor, musician, scientist, poet. His most famous painting is "The Last Supper." The print of the **graceful female** referred to by Lamb was a copy of Leonardo's "Virgin of the Rocks," now in the Louvre in Paris. It was presented to Lamb by Crabb Robinson in 1816.

**95**:11.—**Thomson,** James (1700–1748): a Scotch poet, author of "The Seasons" and "The Castle of Indolence." He wrote in English, not using the Scotch dialect, which fact, Lamb says, they seem to have forgotten.

**95**:12.—**Smollett,** Tobias (1721–1771): Scotch novelist, author of "Roderick Random" (the **Rory** here referred to), "Peregrine Pickle," and "Humphrey Clinker" (a great favorite with Dickens). He also wrote a history of England, beginning with the Revolution, at which point Hume, the Scottish philosopher and historian, completed his history.

**95**:20.—**Stonehenge:** seventeen huge stones standing in Salisbury plain, in Wiltshire, England. They stand in a circle, certain of them being connected by slabs extending from top to top. The ruin is supposed to be the remnant of an old Celtic temple, perhaps the scene of Druidical worship.

**95**:25.—**Hugh of Lincoln.** According to the version of this old legend found in Percy's "Reliques," young Hugh was playing ball with other children of Lincoln when the ball was thrown by accident through the window of a Jew. The child was lured into the house and killed. His body was thrown down a well, but it called to his mother and appointed a meeting with her on the outskirts of the town. There she met the ghost of the child and planned revenge for the deed. There are many versions of the story, some telling of the crucifixion of the boy and of the futile attempts of the Jews to conceal his body. Whatever the legend, it is more or less certain that in 1255 seventy or more Jews of Lincoln were executed because of their connection with the death of a Christian boy. See Professor Child's collection of "Old English Ballads," Percy's "Reliques," and the "Prioress's Tale" from Chaucer's "Canterbury Tales."

**96**:23.—**B——.** John Braham (1774–1856) was the most popular tenor of his time in England. He was greatly admired by Lamb, who mentions him often in his correspondence. Lamb wrote of him after his death, "He was a rare composition of the Jew, the gentleman, and the angel," a description which was afterwards applied to Lamb himself. Lamb was dark and sallow, and his resemblance to the Hebrew type was often commented upon.

**96**:28–32.—**Shibboleth.** See Judges, xii, 6. Here the word is given as the test of Judaism—the pass-word, as it were. **He cannot conquer the Shibboleth** means he cannot get around that

secret and impenetrable thing that makes and keeps him a Jew, despite the fact that he has professedly become a Christian.

**97**:15.—**Jael** slew Sisera, the captain of the opposing army, by driving a nail into his head while he slept. See Judges, iv.

**97**:21.—**Fuller,** Thomas (1608–1661): a cavalier clergyman of the Church of England, whose works, written at a time when Puritan ascendancy might have soured a churchman, reveal, notwithstanding, a delightful optimism. A quaint style, savoring of the Elizabethans, whose work he directly inherited, has imparted to his writings a certain charm which Lamb was quick to discover and prompt to praise. He wrote the "Church History of Britain," "History of the Holy War," and the book by which he is best known, "Worthies of England."

**98**:8.—**Evelyn,** John (1620–1706). His discourses on salads are known only to the scholars; but his "Diary" (second in interest only to Pepys') is widely known.

## X. The Old Benchers of the Inner Temple

(*London Magazine*, September, 1821)

Ainger calls this essay "one of the most varied and beautiful pieces of prose that English literature can boast. Eminently, moreover, does it show us Lamb as the product of two different ages—the child of the Renaissance of the sixteenth century and that of the nineteenth. It is as if Spenser and Wordsworth had laid hands of blessing on his head." In an essay "that is one of the masterpieces of English prose" Lamb opens for us "those pages of autobiography which happily abound in his writings. The words do more than fix places and dates. They strike the key in which his early life was set—and later life, hardly less. The genius of Lamb was surely guided into its special channel by the chance that the first fourteen years of his life were passed, as has been said, 'between cloister and cloister,' between the mediæval atmosphere of the quiet Temple and that of the busy school of Edward VI."

**102**:1.—**I was born,** etc. Samuel Salt owned two sets of chambers in Crown Office Row, Temple. In one of these lived John Lamb, Sr., and his family, and here Charles was born; and here he lived until he went to Christ's Hospital at the age of seven.

**102**:2.—**the Temple.** The group of buildings comprehensively

known as the Temple lies on the south side of Fleet Street near Temple Bar. For a brief account of these buildings, together with the uses to which they are put, see Introduction, page xliii–ff.

**102**:8.—**Spenser,** Edmund (1552–1599): next to Shakespeare, the greatest name in English poetry of the sixteenth century. His principal work is "The Faerie Queen," an allegorical poem in six books, written in the nine verse stanza which has come to be known as the Spenserian.

**103**:10.—**Twickenham Naiades.** In Greek mythology the rivers and springs were supposed to be presided over by river nymphs, called naiades. Twickenham (now a suburb of Richmond) is a town up the Thames. At the time of Lamb's writing it was "in the country," and was sufficiently unimportant for its trade not to pollute the Thames. Pope was called "The Bard of Twickenham," owing to his having resided there for thirty years.

**103**:18.—**moral inscriptions.** Inscriptions (usually in Latin) calling attention to the flight of time and the necessity for improving the moments were common on old sun-dials. A dial now in Lincoln's Inn is inscribed, *Ex hoc momento pendet æternitas* (On this moment hangs eternity).

**104**:24–25.—**Marvell,** Andrew (1620–1678): poet and statesman, a contemporary and one-time assistant of Milton's under Cromwell's Latin Secretaryship. His rural and garden poetry was particularly admired by Lamb. Some critics aver that in his own time he was esteemed a greater poet than Milton himself. In rural poetry he easily surpasses all other minor poets of the Puritan Era.

**107**:13.—**The old benchers:** the name applied to those who are members of the governing body of the Inns of Court. See Introduction, page xliv.

**107**:21.—**Thomas Coventry:** nephew of William, fifth Earl of Coventry; called to the Bench 1766; died 1797. Lamb's characterization of him, as of Salt and Lovel, ranks as one of the most perfect things of its kind in English literature. Note the peculiar fitness of Lamb's epithets, **quadrate, massy, path-keeping,** etc., and the happiness with which he chooses the figures to enforce these, page 107, line 26, page 108, lines 1–2, 5–7. Seldom has an individuality been so clearly and forcefully set forth in such brief space as in the statement that he **made a solitude of chil-**

dren wherever he came, for they fled his insufferable presence, as they would have shunned an Elisha bear.

**108**:22.—**Samuel Salt**: called to the Bench 1782; died 1792. Salt must have been well-to-do, for he kept two indoor servants besides the Lambs, and kept his own carriage. John Lamb, Sr., served Salt for more than forty years, Mrs. Lamb acting as his housekeeper during the same period. Salt provided for them generously in his will, and seems throughout to have been a considerate employer.

**109**:16.—**Miss Blandy.** Her father opposed her marriage to an adventurer, a certain Captain Cranstoun. The captain gave her a powder which she administered to her father with fatal result. She was found guilty of murder, and executed at Oxford in 1752.

**110**:13.—**Susan P——**: Susan Pierson, sister of the Peter Pierson of this essay. "By his second codicil Salt bequeathes her, as a mark of regard, 500 pounds; his silver inkstand; and the works of Pope, Swift, Addison, and Steele . . . hoping that, 'by reading and reflection,' they will 'make her life more comfortable.' How oddly touching this bequest seems to us, in the light thrown on it by Lamb's account of the relations between Salt and his friend's sister! What a pleasant glimpse, again, is here afforded of the 'spacious closet of good old English reading' into which Charles and Mary were 'tumbled' at an early age."—*Ainger.*

**111**:15–16.—**mad Elwes breed**: a family of misers. A sister of the head of the family actually starved herself to death. Her son, John Elwes, was a notorious miser.

**112**:5.—**Lovel.** Lamb's characterization of his father is said to be as faithful as it is sympathetic. The resemblance to Garrick has been confirmed.

**112**:7.—**"flapper."** In "Gulliver's Travels" the hero journeys to Laputa, where he discovers a race so lost in dreamy reflectiveness that a functionary is needed to prompt them when they are spoken to in order that they may reply. This attendant is called the flapper, since he uses an inflated bladder to strike gently the person whom he would recall. The allusion seems aptly chosen when John Lamb's relations with Salt are considered.

**112**:28.—**Garrick,** David (1717–1779): famous English actor. He was a member of Dr. Johnson's literary club, and had been Johnson's pupil at Lichfield. As manager of the Drury Lane

Theatre he brought out twenty-four of Shakespeare's plays, taking the leading parts in most of them himself.

**114**:11–12.—**our great philanthropist:** probably Thomas Howard. Some critics say Thomas Clarkson, but Lamb's parenthesis above, coupled with his footnote on Howard (page 23) would seem to favor the reference here chosen.

**115**:22.—**Friar Bacon:** Roger Bacon (1214?–1294), a Franciscan monk possessed of great learning—so great, indeed, that to most of his contemporaries he appeared a magician.

**116**:16–17.—**Michael Angelo's Moses:** a statue of heroic size, which represents the lawgiver as seated in a chair, holding in one hand the tablets of the law. His beard and hair are long, the latter being arranged about the temples so as to give the impression of short horns. **Michael Angelo** Buonarotti (1475–1504) is the greatest name in Italian art. Like Leonardo (see note on page 263), he was great as painter, poet, architect, and sculptor. In giving Moses horns, Michael Angelo followed the Vulgate translation of the Bible where the Hebrew word meaning "an irradiation" was confused with a word of the same root meaning "horns." Vulgate: "that his face was horned"; English Bible: "that the skin of his face shone."

**117**:18.—**R. N.:** Randall Norris, subtreasurer and librarian of the Inner Temple. He is referred to in the essay on "Christ's Hospital," page 14, line 17, and is mentioned in many of Lamb's letters. To Coleridge Lamb wrote at the time of his mother's death, "Mr. Norris has been more than a father to me." At the time of Mr. Norris's death Lamb wrote to Crabb Robinson: "In him I have a loss the world cannot make up. He was my friend and my father's friend all the life I can remember. . . . Old as I am waxing, in his eyes I was still the child he first knew me. To the last he called me Charley. I have none to call me Charley now."

**118**:7.—**Gentleman's:** the *Gentleman's Magazine*, a famous old periodical, founded in 1731. Obituary notices of prominent men who had died during the month appeared in each issue. Silvanus Urban was the name of the hypothetical editor.

**118**:18.—**Hookers and Seldens.** See note on page 251. Selden (1584–1654) was reputed to be one of the most learned men of his time, and was called "The Great Dictator of Learning to the English Nation."

## XI. Witches and Other Night Fears

(*London Magazine*, October, 1821)

This seemingly innocent essay, with the sentiments of which the most orthodox of our day would not think of finding fault, was the cause of Lamb's controversy with Southey, a literary quarrel which temporarily estranged these lifelong friends. Southey, in reviewing a French theological work, took occasion to criticise the state of religious belief in England. He maintained there was an undercurrent of scepticism greater than many supposed, for the reason that the unbelievers were not always courageous enough to express their real feelings. These unbelievers may have ceased to hope, but "they have not been able to divest themselves of fear." Whereupon he mentions "Elia's Essays," "a book that wants only a sounder religious feeling to be as delightful as it is original." He then cites "Witches and Other Night Fears," and points out the case of "dear little T. H." to indicate the lack of religious training to be found in Leigh Hunt's home. This seems a far cry, and so Lamb must have thought it, for he replied to Southey in a long open letter published in the *London*, vigorously defending Hunt and himself. Southey, the next month, wrote Lamb a letter "full of affection and sorrow," and the threatened quarrel was averted. For a more extended account of the incident see Ainger's "Life of Lamb," Chapter VII, and Talfourd, Chapter XIII.

**119**:12–13.—**That maidens pined away.** It was said of certain witches that they made waxen images of their victims, and melted them slowly before a fire. As the image melted, the victim wasted away. Rossetti's dramatic poem, "Sister Helen," centers about this superstition. For reference to the other phenomena mentioned, all of which are common to witchcraft, see "Sir Roger de Coverley Papers," "The Village Witch."

**121**:6.—**Guyon.** Sir Guyon, the personification of temperance, and his fights with the different kinds of intemperance, form the subject-matter of Book II of Spenser's "Faerie Queen." For his fight with the Fiend, see Book II, vii, 27. Mammon, representing the intemperance of worldly wealth, tries to tempt Sir Guyon with a hoard of glittering treasure, but Guyon resists the glorious bait.

**121**:15.—**Stackhouse,** Thomas (1681–1752). His "History of the Bible" was published in 1737.

**122**:16.—**that slain monster in Spenser.** The adventures of St.

George (the Red Cross Knight), symbolizing the struggle of holiness with sin, occupy Book I of Spenser's "Faerie Queen." When the knight slays the dragon Error, young dragons (errors) come forth from the womb of the slain monster.

**125**:11–12.—**Gorgons**: three frightful sisters of Greek mythology. Instead of hair, their heads were covered with serpents, and they had wings, and brazen claws. The head of Medusa, one of the sisters, was so frightful that everyone who looked upon her was changed to stone. **Hydras.** The hydra was the many-headed serpent killed by Hercules. As fast as one head was hewn off, two grew in its place, until he applied a firebrand to prevent their growth. **Chimæras.** The chimæra was a fire-breathing monster killed by Bellerophon. The fore part of its body was that of a lion, the hind part of a dragon, and the middle of a goat. **Celæno** was one of the **Harpies,** disgusting monsters, having bodies of vultures, with long claws, and heads of maidens. They are the spoilers of tables and banquets. Virgil gives an account of them in the "Æneid," III, 247ff.

**125**:25.—**All the . . . devils in Dante.** The reference is to the description of hell in Dante's "Inferno." **Dante** Alighieri (1265–1321), the greatest Italian poet, and one of the three great epic writers of the world, is famous for his "Divina Commedia." This epic, the first poem of note ever written in Italian, is divided into three parts: "Inferno" (1300), "Purgatorio" (1308), "Paradisio" (1311).

**126**:18.—**A stud of them**: a collection of them. Lamb's use of the word is a play on the word mare in nightmare, based on a common misinterpretation of the derivation of the word. Mare is from the Anglo-Saxon *mar-a*, meaning incubus, or crushing weight.

**127**:12–13.—**Kubla Khan, and Abyssinian maids, and songs of Abara.** Coleridge's uncompleted poem "Kubla Khan" was written after a vivid dream, and remained incomplete because Coleridge was interrupted in the midst of his writing, and forgot the other images of his vision when he again addressed himself to the task of writing it down. The stanzas from which Lamb's quotations are made follow:

"In Xanadu did Kubla Khan
A stately pleasure-dome decree;
Where Alph, the sacred river, ran
Through caverns measureless to man
Down to a sunless sea.

It was a miracle of rare device,
A sunny pleasure-dome with caves of ice!
A damsel with a dulcimer
In a vision once I saw;
It was an Abyssinian maid,
And on her dulcimer she played,
Singing of Mount Abora."

**127**:16ff.—**Barry Cornwall has his tritons,** etc. The reference is to the poem "A Vision," which the author says is "little more than the recollection of a dream." **Barry Cornwall:** the pen-name of Bryan Waller Procter (1787–1874), poet, and biographer of Lamb. **tritons:** mermen attendant upon **Neptune,** the god of the ocean. **nereids:** sea-nymphs.

**128**:3.—**Ino Leucothea.** Ino was the wife of the king of Orchomenus. The gods sent madness upon him because of his marriage, and he threatened the life of his wife; whereupon she leaped into the sea and was changed into Leucothea, the sea-goddess.

## XII. Grace Before Meat

(*London Magazine,* November, 1821)

Lamb says of this paper, in the letter defending himself against Southey, previously referred to: "I have endeavored there to rescue a voluntary duty—good in place, but never, as I remember, literally commanded—from the charge of an undecent formality. Rightly taken, sir, that paper was not against graces, but want of grace; not against ceremony, but the carelessness and slovenliness so often observed in the performance of it."

**130**:6.—**Utopian.** Utopia (Greek, "nowhere") is the name of Sir Thomas More's ideal commonwealth. Utopian therefore means ideal, visionary. Sir Thomas More (1487–1535) published the "Utopia" in 1516, depicting therein an island where everything was perfect—laws, morals, institutions, etc. He draws sharp contrasts between Utopia and existing conditions. **Rabelæsian:** an adjective coined by Lamb from the name François Rabelais (1483–1553), a Benedictine monk, whose stories are noted for their broad humor, biting satire, and farcical incidents. The adjective **Rabelæsian,** therefore, would mean jovial, devil-may-care, or unlicensed.

**133**:19.—**Heliogabalus** (or Elagobalus): a Roman emperor of the third century, noted for his gluttony and licentiousness, for which his name has become a synonym.

**136**:7.—**author of the Rambler.** Dr. Samuel Johnson (1709–1784) was the dominant figure in English literature during his lifetime. He published an English dictionary, "The Lives of the Poets," several periodicals, among them the *Rambler;* and is himself the subject of the most famous biography in English, "Boswell's Life of Johnson." In person Dr. Johnson was large and uncouth; in manners, blunt and impetuous. Macaulay, in his "Essay on Johnson," says of his behavior at table: "The sight of food affected him as it affects wild beasts and birds of prey. . . . Whenever he was so fortunate as to have near him a hare that had been kept too long, or a meat pie made with rancid butter, he gorged himself with such violence that his veins swelled, and the moisture broke out on his forehead."

**136**:29.—**Hog's Norton:** a village in Oxfordshire. An old proverb has it that at Hog's Norton pigs play on the organ, to which Lamb doubtless refers when he speaks of **those better befitting organs.** Graces are more dissonant at rich men's tables than the strains of an organ played upon by pigs.

**138**:1.—**Lucian:** a Greek satirist of the second century. His most important writings are his "Dialogues," which exhibit the widest possible range of temperament, from the most serious vein to that of the broadest buffoonery.

## XIII. Dream-Children: A Reverie

(*London Magazine,* January, 1822)

This essay is considered by many to be Lamb's finest piece of prose. As a piece of intimate self-revelation it uncovers the depths of Lamb's heart as perhaps no other published work has done. It was written shortly after the death of John Lamb, who died in October, 1821. Lamb had small cause enough either to love or greatly to respect his careless relative (see essay "My Relations" and notes); but he seems to have had a tender feeling for John, and his death brought a sense of loneliness and depression. To Wordsworth he wrote, five months after John's death, of "a certain deadness to everything, which I think I may date from poor John's loss." As far as family ties were concerned, the life of Charles and Mary Lamb was more than ever one of "dual

loneliness," for they had but themselves out of all the number who had lived in the Temple chambers forty years before.

**140**:6.—**great-grandmother Field.** Mary Field, Lamb's grandmother, was for fifty years housekeeper for the Plumers at Blakesware. (See note on page 283.) She died of cancer in 1792. Lamb has perpetuated her memory in his poem, "The Grandame."

**140**:11–12.—**The Children in the Wood.** This well-known story is actually associated with Norfolk, which fact, perhaps, induced Lamb to choose that locality in preference to giving the real location of the Plumer mansion. For the ballad of "The Babes in the Wood" see Percy's "Reliques" or Professor Child's collection of "English and Scottish Popular Ballads."

**142**:12.—**the twelve Cæsars:** the Roman emperors from Julius Cæsar to Domitian. "I could tell of an old marble hall, with Hogarth's prints, and the Roman Cæsars in marble hung round." —*Lamb to Southey.*

**143**:29.—**he became lame-footed too.** If Charles was ever "lame-footed" it was a temporary matter. John Lamb, however, was lame, the occasion being, according to Lucas, the fall of a stone in the year 1796. That they ever **took off his limb** is probably untrue.

**145**:5.—**Lethe:** a river of the lower world from which the shades drank, thus obtaining forgetfulness of the past.

## XIV. Distant Correspondents

(*London Magazine*, March, 1822)

The germ of this essay, full of Lamb's quaint foolery, is to be found in a letter to Barron Field, the **B. F.** of the sub-title, dated August 31, 1817. The letter is printed by Talfourd in Chapter X. In Ainger's Edition it will be found on page 4 of Volume II; in Lucas's Edition on page 500 of Volume I. **B. F.,** Barron Field (1786–1846), was an English barrister with whom Lamb became acquainted through a brother who was a clerk in the India House. Field was a man of literary taste and some journalistic ability, writing for Hunt's *Reflector* and publishing a volume or two after going to Australia. In 1816 he was appointed Justice of the Supreme Court of New South Wales, remaining in this position for eight years.

**146**:13.—**Cowley's Post-Angel.** From the "Hymn to Light," stanza 6:

"Let a post-angel start with thee
And thou the goal of earth shalt reach as soon as he."

**Cowley** (1618–1667) was a poet and essayist who enjoyed a high reputation during his lifetime. Unlike his contemporary, Milton, he was a Royalist.

**146**:21–**147**:3.—**that interesting theosophist—Plato's man.** A theosophist is one who claims direct revelation from God with regard to Himself. The theosophist here referred to is the moon. Hallward and Hill, with painstaking scholarship, have traced the allusion to one of Milton's Latin poems, that "On the Platonic Idea" (see Cowper's translation, Globe Edition, page 450), where **Plato's man,** the original man as he first existed in the mind of God, is identified with the man in the moon. This clearly explains Lamb's calling the moon both a **theosophist** and **Plato's man.**

**149**:22–23.—**the epoch of . . . (Habakkuk) falling in with . . . the time of . . . (Daniel).** The King James Bible places the date of Habakkuk's prophecy as 626 B.C., while the events of Daniel's prophetic experience began in 607 B.C. Thus the former antedated the latter by nineteen years.

**149**:30.—**Lord C.:** Thomas Pitt, second Lord Camelford (1775–1804). He was killed in a duel. It is a fact that he directed his body to be buried in Switzerland, near Lake Lampierre, but it is doubtful whether the direction was carried out, the body lying in a vault in London for some time.

**150**:26.—**St. Gothard.** Lamb is probably alluding to Gothard, Bishop of Hildesheim (960–1038), not the Alpine hermit after whom the famous pass is named. St. Gothard is the patron saint of those who travel by water.

**152**:18.—**Hades of Thieves:** the hell to which thieves are consigned. Lamb is referring to the fact that in Australia was one of the early penal colonies to which malefactors were deported from England.

**152**:19–20.—**Diogenes . . . with his perpetual fruitless lantern.** Diogenes was an austere Cynic philosopher, born about 412 B.C. After an extravagant youth, he turned to the opposite extreme; lived on coarse food, dressed in coarse apparel, subjected himself to rigorous hardships, and actually took up his residence in a tub, so it was said. The story goes that, in his cynical fashion, he traversed the streets of Corinth with a lighted lantern in

broad daylight. When asked the meaning of his unusual conduct he replied that he was searching the city for an honest man.

**153**:6–8.—**young Spartans . . . born with six fingers, which spoils their scanning.** The art of thieving was a part of the young Spartan's education. If, as Lamb playfully assumes, they are born with six fingers, they will have difficulty in marking off the scansion of a line of English verse, because the common English meter is pentameter, or five stress.

**153**:15.—**ten Delphic voyages.** The great temple of Apollo was at Delphi. Here the priestess Pythia sat over her tripod, interpreting the voice of the oracle whenever the mystic fumes rose from the opening in the ground beneath. People came from great distances to consult the oracle. Lamb says he could make ten voyages to Delphi to obtain answers to the questions he is anxious to put to Field before he could receive answers from Field himself, who lives at a so much greater distance.

## XV. The Praise of Chimney-sweepers

(*London Magazine*, May, 1822)

In the magazine, as originally published, the essay had a subtitle, "A May-Day Effusion." The actual condition of the **unfledged practitioners,** the young sweeps, was becoming a national scandal. The extreme youth of these **clergy imps,** the actual system of peonage under which they worked, the hard labor and the beatings they had to undergo, the scarce-cooled chimneys into which they were forced—and in which they sometimes stuck fast—to all these things the British conscience was gradually becoming aroused. The wonder is that Lamb's "Effusion" reflects so little of the grossness and so much of the cheeriness of their occupation; and yet it is but natural to see in Lamb's point of view that essential optimism which is reflected in most of his writing, and which the casual observer would think to be so foreign to his life.

**160**:28ff.—**The premature apprenticements of these tender victims,** etc. This was made the subject of parliamentary investigation about this time. The poet Montgomery contributed to the stirring up of popular opinion by means of a volume which he entitled "The Chimney-Sweeper's Friend, and Climbing-Boy's Album." Scott, Wordsworth, Moore, Lamb, and others contributed verses to the volume. Lamb wrote nothing of his own, but

copied out Blake's "The Chimney-Sweeper" from the "Songs of Innocence," a volume then unknown and unappreciated save within a very narrow circle.

**161**:8.—**young Montagu:** Edward Wortley Montagu, son of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, whose letters are famous in literature, ran away from Westminster School and became a chimney-sweep. By means of a chance recognition on the street he was restored to his home.

**161**:11.—**Arundel Castle.** Charles Howard, the eleventh Duke of Norfolk, set up in the gardens of his Sussex seat, Arundel Castle, the famous Arundel marbles, now in Oxford.

**161**:17–18.—**Venus lulled Ascanius.** Cf. Virgil's "Æneid," I, 643ff. Ascanius was the son of Æneas. Wishing to make Dido, Queen of Carthage, fall in love with Æneas, Venus sent Cupid to her in the form of Ascanius, keeping the real Ascanius with her.

**162**:24.—**Jem White:** James White (1775–1820), a schoolmate of Lamb's at Christ's Hospital, and one of his best friends up to the time of White's death. He was a great wag, full of inimitable drolleries of a kind that particularly appealed to Lamb. He foisted on the public a volume of letters purported to be by Falstaff, a book which Lamb was fond of praising.

**162**:30–31.—**the fair of St. Bartholomew.** This was the great English fair from the time of its inception, in 1133, till its discontinuance in 1840. It was held on St. Bartholomew's Day, September 3d, at Smithfield, and was the occasion for a riotous good time. Lucas records that "Lamb took Wordsworth through its noisy mazes in 1802."

**164**:2.—**Rochester,** John Wilmot, Earl of (1647–1680): a favorite of Charles II, and a worthy member of "The Merry Monarch's" mad court. English literature since Rochester's time is full of his escapades, his name being a byword for intrigue and debauchery.

## XVI. A Dissertation on Roast Pig

(*London Magazine*, September, 1822)

There has been a great deal of discussion as to where Lamb got the central idea of this paper, that purporting to come from the Chinese manuscript. That no such manuscript ever came under Lamb's observation is generally agreed; but that Manning, who had traveled in Thibet and China, furnished the idea, is

pretty certain, for Lamb says so in a letter to Bernard Barton. The editors have dug up old traditions respecting the origin of cooking, one in particular being a translation of Porphyry's "Abstinence from Animal Food" (third century), in which the germ of this essay is contained; but the truth of the matter is that the idea Lamb here expounds was doubtless more or less current in his time. Much of the matter in this essay respecting the love of roast pig may be found in a letter which Lamb wrote to Coleridge in 1822 (Talfourd, Chapter XII); and other amusing letters in which he thanks correspondents for presents of pig may be found in the volumes of "Letters," Lucas's, Ainger's, or Macdonald's editions.

**166**:2.—**my friend M.** Thomas Manning (1774–1840) was introduced to Lamb in 1799, from which time they were fast friends. Many of Lamb's most entertaining letters were addressed to Manning, some of them travelling long distances to reach their destination, for Manning was an eastern traveler of note and was much abroad. He was also a linguist and mathematician, being mathematical tutor at Cambridge for a time.

**166**:6.—**Confucius** (551?–478 B.C): the Latinized form of the Chinese Kong-fu-tse, the sage and philosopher of China, the founder of Confucianism, which is the basis of Chinese law and education. His "Mundane Mutations" is a fabrication of Lamb's.

**169**:20–21.—**Pekin, then an inconsiderable assize town:** a small county town—a humorous touch of mock-historic accuracy. "It recalls the inimitable seriousness of minute detail, by which Swift imparts an air of probability to his wildest inventions in 'Gulliver's Travels.' Assize towns are county towns in which the periodical sessions of the judges are held."—*Hallward and Hill.* Lamb has the same humorous recourse in lines 29–31, where he speaks of the **charge** of the **judge, the townsfolk, strangers, reporters, and all present.**

**170**:28–29.—There should be carefully noted at this point the marked change between Lamb's customary narrative style and his more involved, highly studied style of exposition. Be prepared to analyze this difference.

**172**:4.—**radiant jellies—shooting stars.** The interesting notes on this point by Hallward and Hill, and Lucas, show the wide extent of the collection of "cabinet curiosities" with which Lamb had stored his mind, "out-of-the-way humors and opinions" that constituted his learning. "'The heat of the fire causes the eyes

of the pig to melt and drop out, like bright jellies, like meteors.' Cf. Ben Jonson's 'Bartholomew Fair,' II, 1. In Donne's 'Eclogues' there is a reference to the superstition that shooting stars left jellies behind them where they fell:

'As he that sees a star fall runs apace
And finds a jelly in the place.'"—*Hallward and Hill.*

"In Holland's translation of Pliny, Book XI, Chapter XII, is the suggestion that honey on the leaves at daybreak is 'either a certaine sweat of the skies, or some unctuous jelly proceeding from the stars.' The belief is still popular in Ireland that the jelly-like fungoid growth on damp hillsides is caused by shooting stars."—*Lucas.*

**175**:20.—**St. Omer's:** a Jesuit college in the French city of that name. Many English boys of Roman Catholic families were sent there to be educated. Lamb's attendance upon the institution is, of course, feigned.

**176**:5.—**but consider, he is a weakling—a flower.** Lamb's almost pathetic love of roast pig seems to have suffered a lapse in later life. Perhaps he was surfeited with pork, for many correspondents of the *London,* delighted with the essay, sent Lamb presents of pig. To one who sent him a present of game he wrote, in the *Athenæum,* November 30, 1833: "Time was, when Elia was not arrived at his taste, that he preferred to all luxuries a roasted Pig. But he disclaims all such green-sickness appetites in the future, though he hath to acknowledge the receipt of many a delicacy in that kind from correspondents—good, but mistaken men—in consequence of their erroneous supposition, that he carried up into maturer life the prepossessions of childhood." For the entire *Athenæum* article, see Lucas's edition, Volume I, page 343.

## XVII. A Bachelor's Complaint of the Behaviour of Married People

(*London Magazine,* September, 1822)

This essay, save for sundry small changes, was originally published in the *Reflector* in 1811. That the essay is no more than good-humored banter, in Lamb's characteristic vein, may be inferred when Lamb's other utterances upon the married state are collated. His innate love of children is well known, his poem

to Thornton Hunt, his tales for children, and his sympathetic expressions in "Christ's Hospital" and "Dream-Children" amply testifying to that fact. Other reflections on marriage in general are found in his essay, "The Wedding" ("Essays of Elia," second series), in which a different temper is revealed. He begins: "I do not know when I have been better pleased than at being invited last week to be present at the wedding of a friend's daughter. I like to make one at these ceremonies, which to us old people give back our youth in a manner, and restore our gayest season, in the remembrance of our own success, or the regrets, scarcely less tender of our own youthful disappointments, in this point of settlement. On these occasions I am sure to be in good-humor for a week or two after, and enjoy a reflected honeymoon. Being without a family, I am flattered with these temporary adoptions into a friend's family; I feel a sort of cousin-hood, or uncle-ship, for the season; I am inducted into degrees of affinity; and, in the participated socialities of the little community, I lay down for a brief while my solitary bachelorship."

**180**:4.—**phœnixes.** The phœnix is the fabled bird of Arabia, said to live for five hundred years. At the expiration of the period it makes its nest of spices, and, as on a kind of funeral pyre, burns itself to ashes, from which it comes forth with renewed life for another five-hundred-year period.

## XVIII. Modern Gallantry

(*London Magazine*, November, 1822)

"Among the prominent characteristics of Lamb, I know not how it is that I have omitted to notice the peculiar emphasis and depth of his courtesy. This quality was in him a really chivalrous feeling, springing from his heart, and cherished with the sanctity of a duty. . . . The instinct of his heart was to think highly of female nature, and to pay real homage . . . to the sacred *idea* of pure and virtuous womanhood."—*De Quincey.*

**189**:12.—**Joseph Paice.** Lamb's Quaker friend, Bernard Barton, expressed a doubt as to there being a real Joseph Paice, supposing that Lamb had invented him to illustrate his ideal of a **preux Chevalier of age.** In a letter to Barton (1830) Lamb says: "The more my character comes to be known, the less my veracity will come to be suspected. . . . Why, that Joseph

Paice was as real a person as Joseph Hume, and a great deal pleasanter. A careful observer of life, Bernard, has no need to invent. Nature romances it for him." Miss Anne Manning's "Family Pictures," published in 1860, tells some interesting anecdotes of Paice, illustrative not only of his courtesy, but also of his philanthropy. She is authority for the statement that Lamb was for a time in Paice's office in Bread Street Hill before entering the employ of the South-Sea House in 1789 or 1790.

**189**:21–22.—**Though bred a Presbyterian and brought up a merchant, he was the finest gentleman of his time.** To understand the force of the **though** the American student must remember that the English aristocracy, members of the Church of England, despise dissenters and look down on tradesmen. On either count Joseph Paice would naturally be supposed to be disqualified for the title Lamb gives him of **the finest gentleman of his time.**

**190**:18.—**Sir Calidore:** the type of courtesy, and the hero of the sixth book of Spenser's "Faerie Queen." The original of the character was Sir Philip Sidney.

**190**:18–19.—**Sir Tristan:** a courteous, but unfaithful, knight of King Arthur's Round Table. Lamb hit more or less at random upon the name of any one of the members of Arthur's court, in order to signify the knightly courtesy of the order, rather than to mention specifically the knightly courtesy of any one.

## XIX. Old China

(*London Magazine*, March, 1823)

Under this somewhat misleading title Lamb has given us another essay full of self-revelation and autobiographic interest. None of the essays is written with more charm of manner, nor in a character more tenderly reminiscent. The picture of Mary Lamb here brought out is needed to supplement that given us in "Mackery End"; while the glimpse of the early struggles of brother and sister given in a tender, half-humorous vein, reveals the strength and beauty of the tie that united Charles and Mary. This was Wordsworth's favorite essay.

**196**:1–2.—**I am quick at detecting these summer clouds in Bridget.** Bridget Elia is Mary Lamb. Ainger, in his "Biography," speaks of the mutual dependence and sympathy that existed between these two, "her eyes often fixed on his as on 'some adoring

disciple,'" while he "in turn was always on the watch to detect in her face any sign of failing health or spirits."

**196**:20.—**Beaumont and Fletcher:** Francis Beaumont (1584–1616) and John Fletcher (1579–1625), English dramatists, who wrote thirteen plays in collaboration, among them, "The Knight of the Burning Pestle," "The Maid's Tragedy," etc.

**196**:21.—**Barker's, in Covent Garden.** This old book shop in Great Russell Street was beneath the lodgings which the Lambs occupied, 1817–1823. In August, 1823, they moved to **Islington** (line 25).

**197**:17.—**"Lady Blanche."** The real name of the picture is "Modesty and Vanity." The print was actually acquired as here stated, and hung in the Lambs' rooms. Mary wrote a poem upon it. Poem and print may both be found in Lucas's edition, Volume V.

**202**:10.—**Crœsus:** the last king of Lydia, who ruled B.C. 560–546. Owing to his great wealth his court at Sardis was one of the most famous of antiquity. His name is now synonymous with fabulous wealth. **Jew R——:** Nathan Meyer Rothschild (1777–1836), founder of the English branch of the great banking house.

## XX. Poor Relations

(*London Magazine*, May, 1823)

No essay better illustrates Lamb's command of forceful, epigrammatic English, and his ability to summon at will from literature and life the allusion or illustrative touch that expresses exactly what he wants to say. The first paragraph bristles with terse epigrammatic phrases, many of them hints or memories of quotations twisted to meet the present need; others, direct references, forceful because so happily chosen.

**203**:9–13.—**a blot on your 'scutcheon:** like the bar sinister, in heraldry, denoting illegitimacy. **a death's head at your banquet:** referring to the ancient custom in Egypt of carrying through a banquet hall a skeleton, as a reminder to the feasters that they should enjoy the present, since death awaits. **Agathocles' pot.** Agathocles (B.C. 361–289) was the son of a potter, and was himself apprenticed to the trade. He rose, however, to be tyrant of Sicily. In his position of power the memory of his lowly trade must have affected him with irritation akin to that pro-

duced by the presence of a poor relation. **a Mordecai in your gate.** See Esther, v, 9–13. **a Lazarus at your door.** See Luke, xvi, 19–21. **a lion . . . a frog . . . a fly . . . a mote.** See respectively I Kings, xiii, 24; Exodus, viii, 2–6; Ecclesiastes, x, 1; Matthew, vii, 3.

**206**:11.—**Richard Amlet.** In Vanbrugh's comedy "The Confederacy" (1705), Dick Amlet is a gambler who affects high society. He is perpetually being embarrassed, however, by the attentions of his mother, who is a vulgar tradeswoman **(His stars are perpetually crossed by the malignant maternity,** etc.).

**207**:18.—**Nessian venom.** Hercules died from the effects of the poisoned blood of the Centaur, Nessus, in which the sacrificial garment he wore had been steeped.

**207**:19.—**Latimer,** Hugh, Bishop of Worcester (1490–1555): a martyr of the English Protestant Church, burned at Oxford. He was a sizar while at Cambridge.

**207**:20.—**Hooker,** Richard (1553–1600), the famous English divine, was a servitor while at Oxford.

**210**:19–20.—**young Grotiuses.** Hugo Grotius (1583–1645), a Dutch jurist, laid the foundations of international law. The reference here is, doubtless, to his best-known work, "De Jure Belli et Pacis" (Concerning the Law of War and Peace).

## XXI. The Old Margate Hoy

(*London Magazine*, July, 1823)

With no attempt to mystify or deceive, Lamb in this essay reveals himself in all candor as one who detested the water, a land-lover, a city man devoted to "the sweet security of streets." It will be remembered that he crossed the channel but once, and then for only a fleeting visit to the Continent. Loving the scenes of his childhood and the city of his birth, he was content seldom to wander far, "his household gods planting a terrible fixed foot, and not being rooted up without blood"; and the sea could not, in the very nature of things, appeal strongly to such an one.

**212**:13.—**Margate:** a watering place near the mouth of the Thames, in Kent.

**212**:18.—**Hoy:** an old-fashioned coasting vessel, single-masted, sloop-rigged.

**213**:7.—**a great sea-chimera.** Since the chimera of mythology was a fire-breathing monster, the fitness of Lamb's comparison

will readily be appreciated. Note the force of the verbs coined from nouns, **chimneying** and **furnacing.**

**213**:8.—**fire-god . . . Scamander.** When the Scamander River rose to overcome Achilles, Vulcan, the god of fire, was sent to beat the river back with flames. ("Iliad," XX–XXI.)

**213**:24–25.—**like another Ariel.** See "The Tempest," I, ii, 196–198. Ariel, an airy spirit, was servant to Prospero, doing his bidding with unimagined speed.

**216**:4.—**Colossus at Rhodes:** one of the seven wonders of the world. A huge statue whose legs bestrode the entrance to the harbor at Rhodes.

**219**:8.—**Juan Fernandez:** an island in the Pacific upon which Alexander Selkirk, the original of "Robinson Crusoe," was cast away.

**219**:28–29.—**Cinq Port:** the general name given the five English Channel ports: Hastings, Romney, Hythe, Dover, and Sandwich.

**220**:16.—**Amphitrites.** Amphitrite, a nereid, was the wife of Neptune, the god of the sea.

## XXII. Blakesmoor in H——shire

(*London Magazine,* September, 1824)

Under the name of Blakesmoor, Lamb writes of Blakesware in Hertfordshire, the manor house of the Plumer family, over which his grandmother Field presided as housekeeper. Other references to this much-loved place are to be found in "Dream-Children," "Mrs. Leicester's School," "Rosamund Gray," and in numbers of Lamb's letters. The house was pulled down about 1822.

**225**:2.—**Ovid:** Publius Ovidius Naso (B.C. 43–A.D. 18), celebrated Roman poet. He combined in a poetical work under the name of "Metamorphoses" the legends that involved miraculous transformations. His subjects were long favorites with tapestry weavers. Among them are **Actæon** (line 3), who beheld **Diana** (line 4), the goddess of the hunt, bathing with her nymphs about her. Diana caused Acetæon to be turned into a stag. He was pursued by fifty hounds and torn to pieces.

**225**:5–6.—**Dan Phœbus** (Apollo), the god of music, was challenged to a musical contest by **Marsyas** (line 6), who had found the magic flute of Minerva. The loser of the contest was to be

flayed alive by the winner. Lamb refers to the **culinary coolness** of Phœbus Apollo **deliberately divesting Marsyas** of his skin, **eel-fashion.**

**225**:7–8.—**in which old Mrs. Battle died.** See the essay, "Mrs. Battle's Opinions on Whist." The identity of Mrs. Battle has never been fully established; but some of the editors, basing their opinion upon this reference, have identified her with the Plumer family.

**227**:1–2.—**Mowbray's or De Clifford's:** nobles of rank and pedigree. Thomas Mowbray, Duke of Norfolk, was banished by Richard II. De Clifford, founder of the family of that name, was grandfather of Jane Clifford, "Fair Rosamond." See note on page 246.

**229**:9.—**Nero** (A.D. 37–68): the most heartless of the Roman emperors.

**229**:10.—**Galba** (B.C. 3–A.D. 69): Nero's successor, noted for his avarice and severity.

**229**:27.—**Pan:** the Greek god of fields and flocks, and **Sylvanus:** the Roman god of fields and forests.

## XXIII. The Superannuated Man

(*London Magazine*, May, 1825)

In connection with this essay note carefully that portion of Lamb's life treated in the Introduction, pp. xxviii–xxix, under the head "The Superannuated Man." **Superannuated:** retired from active service on account of age or incapacity.

**233**:1.—**my native fields of Hertfordshire.** Lamb was born in London; but most of his earliest holidays were passed at Blakesware in Hertfordshire.

**235**:11–12.—**Boldero, Merryweather, Bosanquet, and Lacy:** all fictitious names. The East India Company was, moreover, a corporation, not a partnership.

**235**:18.—**Bastile:** the famous old castle-prison in Paris, destroyed during the French Revolution.

**238**:14.—**Gresham,** Sir Thomas (1519–1579): founder of the Royal Exchange, the merchant prince of his time. **Whittington,** Richard, more commonly Dick (1358?–1423): famous as Lord Mayor of London.

**238**:22.—**Aquinas,** St. Thomas (1225?–1274): a famous Italian theologian. His published works numbered seventeen folios.

**238**:24-25.—**A fortnight has passed,** etc. As originally published in the *London*, the essay was printed in two parts. Part II began with these words, prefaced by the second of the mottoes printed at the beginning of the essay.

**238**:31.—**Carthusian.** This monastic order, founded in 1086, was bound to the use of the poorest clothing, the most meagre fare, and to a life of unbroken solitude.

**239**:17.—**Elgin Marbles.** Lord Elgin brought to England in 1802 some of the best fragments of Greek sculpture ever found, chiefly the work of Phidias from the Parthenon at Athens. These are familiarly known as the Elgin Marbles. They are now in the British Museum, having been bought by the government in 1816.

**239**:31.—**Black Monday:** a name given to Easter Monday in 1360. Edward III was encamped before Paris. The day came on dark with rain and fog, and so cold that many of the army perished. It is "Black Monday" for Lamb because it begins another week of the detested drudgery.

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